

# ESSAYS AND STUDIES

BY MEMBERS OF

THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

VOL. XXI

COLLECTED BY HERBERT READ

OXFORD

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1936

THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

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## SOME ASPECTS OF SIR THOMAS MORE'S ENGLISH

IF a candid Utopian, after landing in England in the present year, inquired of those he came across about the fame of Sir Thomas More and the reasons which have endeared him to his compatriots, he would certainly receive more than one answer. Some would be content with asserting that socialistic ideas have gained considerable ground within recent years and that it is fair to do homage for them to the man who first revealed their existence in the island fashioned like to the new moon. Others—more probably all—would think that whatever else Sir Thomas was, he was a man of character, and that character is the thing English people prize most. But then would not there be some in that large body who, having read the Chancellor's works, the English even more than the Latin, would point out that he was a living force in his nation by the way in which he used and enriched his native language? The writer of the present essay had better state at the outset that he has long been familiar with those various sections of More's friends—and feels particularly drawn towards the third. While understanding the admiration of the English for their hero and their saint, and sharing it to the full, he thinks that no side of the great Chancellor's activity is more attractive than his language, because he was, if anything, a maker of English.

It may be mere feeling rather than definite certainty, but the feeling exists and it is widely spread. No schoolboy can have read Shakespeare's *Richard III* in an annotated edition without knowing that some of its most popular scenes owe to More not only their matter but some of the words which have most contributed to make them famous. More advanced students, who have gone into Skeat's *Specimens*, often remember the curious passage about *nay* and *no* in which the Chancellor, while carefully drawing the line between the two, manages to follow the example of Homer caught napping and

mis-states his own rule. This is hardly enough to recommend a writer as an authority on things linguistic, it is true, but then one need not go very far to discover that that is an exceptional passage and that elsewhere Sir Thomas's wording is no less safe than his teaching. His love of distinctions applies to *the* and *a*, to *the* and *that*, to *no* and *not*, and on those various points, to say nothing of others, his pen does not go wrong. Then there are his references to the grammatical vocabulary itself, the *subjectum* and the *praedicatum*, the *copulatives* and the *disjunctives* and the rest, which are sure to delight the schoolmaster, while an occasional rhyme, such as *the tail of a tale* or *the underpropper not very proper*, seems calculated to please a less learned and larger public. Would not a sentence like the following appeal to many, either learned or unlearned?

These folke . . . vttrely loue no lenton fast, nor lightlye no  
faste elles, sauing brekefast, and eate fast, and drinke fast, and  
slepe fast . . . and thā come furth and rayle fast.

It seems only Shakespeare, or Dickens, could beat More at the game. Last, but not least, his interest in grammar never turns into pedantry, nor does his interest in words and the amusement he takes in their unexpected associations drift into mere word-tomfoolery. He was a master of his vocabulary, not its slave. We are told that when reading ancient texts he would not, as so many others—including, we are afraid, many twentieth-century undergraduates—first ascertain their meaning and from them gather the meaning of the sentences which they compose, but inversely gather the force of the words from the sentences in which they occur; and we may quite agree with Richard Pace, the author of the remark, when he points out that this is not contrary to grammar, but above it, and an instinct of genius. A writer of an early stage of English prose, then—and a prolific one at that—not only sufficiently aware of the technical elements of his language, but keen upon its niceties, fully open to its possibilities, and at the same time justly anxious to make his phrase the handmaid to his thought, does not all that give promise of a rich and attractive contribution to the history of English?

If we consider the more external aspects of it first, it is not, of course, a maker but a witness that we must look for. The phonetic and even the morphological facts of a language are independent of a given writer, and all that can be expected from the data supplied by More in the field of early modern pronunciation to begin with is an illustration of the facts made clear to us by Professor Zachrisson, or Professor Wyld, or Professor Luick. What that state of things was we know pretty well now. The great modern shift which at one time affected the English vowels and made them so puzzling in their spoken form to those who try to learn the language from the written one was then, and to a certain extent had been for some time, an accomplished fact. The accented vowels of such words as *make*, *deep*, *soon* had thus reached the pronunciation they have at the present day or a stage very near to it, and the parallel process of diphthongization had already begun in those of *desire*, *house*. Of this we have direct evidence in the works of our author. Not only does he, for example, sometimes write *diepely* for *deeply* or *souner* for *sooner* in his autograph letters, but the same spellings occasionally occur in the same or similar words in the texts printed by Rastell, in spite of the tradition, even then against such spellings, which was to lead to an all but complete rejection of them. An interesting case in connexion with the vowel-shift is that of the word *danger*, which in the letters frequently, and in the printed texts once at least, occurs with the spelling *dayngeor* (or *daingeour*), apparently a proof that in late medieval times a previous *au* before *ng(e)* had become long *a* and later long *e* for which *ai*, *ay* are well-known spellings. Another word to which it is perhaps worth while drawing attention, though it occurs but a few times, and that in the latter texts only, is the word *berive* (or *byryue*, or *berieve* = our *bereave*), showing, it seems, a sound that was new in the word *bereave* in the sixteenth century, when the regular vowel was as certainly a long slack *e* in *bereave* as it was a long *i* in *believe*. We may also point to two short passages, equally from the printed texts, the interest of which is to offer intentionally phonetic spellings. Having occasion somewhere

10 SOME ASPECTS OF SIR THOMAS MORE'S ENGLISH  
to quote the opinion of a German on the habit of fasting  
More writes:

Fare to sould te laye men fasten, let te prester fasten,  
and, wishing elsewhere to represent the language of a  
Northerner, he quotes it as follows:

What good felow (quod one of the northern men) whare  
wonne thou? Be not we aleuen here, and thou ne but ene la  
alene, and all we agreed?

*fare* and *whare* for *where*, and also on the other hand *ene* and  
*alene* for northern *one*, *alone* are, we repeat, merely illustra-  
tions of well-known facts. So well, apparently, was the *e*-  
sound established for a Middle English long *a* that the *a*-sign  
is here used to represent what could not be anything but long  
slack *e*. The amusing thing is that Rastell (as perhaps More  
had done before him) renders the same sound once by *a* and  
in the next line by *e*. But even in his intentionally phonetic  
spellings consistency can hardly be expected from a sixteenth-  
century printer.

Can we go farther than this and draw additional information  
on the pronunciation of the sixteenth century from the rhymes  
of our author, for we have some poems written by him? The  
first thing that strikes us when we look up the said poems  
is that a certain number of the rhymes used in them would  
be bad to-day. *Watch* does not rhyme with *catch*, neither  
does *peered* rhyme with *friared* (written, it is true, *freered*), nor  
*devil* with *evil*, nor *fall* with *shall*, nor *blood* with *rood*. But  
this need not surprise us when we remember that the great  
vowel-shift of the late Middle Ages was followed by numerous  
other changes in the course of the following centuries, and  
that a sound common to two words four hundred years ago  
has often remained in one and changed in the other. The  
difficulty is hardly greater when neither of the two words of  
a pair has preserved the sound it had in the early sixteenth  
century, whether both have actually changed as in the case  
of *pass*: *was*, *bereven* (= our *bereave*): *heven*, *none*: *alone*, *gone*:  
*every chone* (= *every one*), or whether in one of the two words  
there has been, not an actual sound-change but a substitution

of one sound for another as in the case of *enclose*: *lose*. This is nothing new to us, and Professor Wyld has taught us that the various rhymes just quoted were all good in the sixteenth century. Where the difficulty really begins is when we come across cases which are not in accordance with what we know about the pronunciation of the time, but which show, or seem to show, a pronunciation that is either behind it or in advance of it. Even those cases, however, will not detain us long.

It is certainly curious, from an objective point of view, that such pairs as *way*: *aye*, *yours*: *towers* may have been considered—indeed that they should be considered still—as acceptable rhymes in English poetry if the two words in each pair had not the same sound at the time considered. And still it is a fact, and the reason why the said rhymes can pass muster is that the sound had been the same in the two words some time before. Such rhymes ‘occur in the best poets; they are convenient. What more is necessary?’ Thus Professor Wyld. But if the venerable tradition thus appealed to, a tradition at least as old as the age of early printed books, has its full value in the field of rhymes, little can be inferred from it in the field of pronunciation in general. The same applies to the coupling of syllables that bear different accents. When we find *officere* rhyming with *enquere*, we may admit that the rhyme was still possible about a century after Chaucer as it had been in his day, but it does not follow that the sound of the third syllable of *officere* was as full in our period as it had been about a hundred and fifty years before. Though we cannot say exactly what the degree of stress, and thence the sound, of that syllable was in More’s day, there is reason to believe that the rhyme considered gives no clue to current pronunciation. Unless we are much mistaken, the same remark applies to those cases in which a difference of accentuation between the final syllables of two words is accompanied by one in the quality of their consonants, as for instance in *otherwise*: *promise*: *wise*. Here again the spelling counts more than the actual pronunciation. Should we hesitate to admit the fact we should find it confessed implicitly by Levins in his *Manipulus Vocabulorum*, which professes

to be a rhyming dictionary, and explicitly by Puttenham in his *Arte of English Poetry*. The date of the latter work is 1589 and that of the former 1570; the habits of poets cannot have been very different seventy or eighty years earlier. Thus such rhymes as show a pronunciation behind that of their time have not, after all, much to teach us, and their importance is further reduced by the fact that they are not numerous.

The advanced type is more interesting but still less largely represented. One representative of that type at least is *fryre*: *desyre*, in which there is no reason why *fryre* (our *friar*) should not be pronounced with a diphthong, thus showing a double change, one from Middle English *ē* to *ī* and one from *ī* to *ei* (also probable in *enquire*, *entyre*, and *bryer* which are sometimes thus written in our printed texts). It cannot be said that *sike* (our *sick*): *like* is another, for the vowel of *sike* cannot be a diphthong, and only an imperfect rhyme is here possible, between *ī* and the early diphthong—a kind of rhyme which is far from unknown in the sixteenth and even in the seventeenth century; but what can be said is that we have here the Early Modern English *sike*, through which the Middle English *sēke* must have passed before it became the later *sick*.

To these few remarks on More's pronunciation it should be added that, in his case as in that of others, we are not to worry too much about the acquisition of a definite knowledge which it is probable we shall never fully possess. If, as we have seen, *beryve* is significant, the same may be said of *bereven*, and *fryre* (no doubt our *friar*) should not make us forget *frere*. What can be inferred from our data is obviously that though English had at our period given up its medieval system of sounds and reached a new one, the earlier tradition could easily be appealed to, while the door was open to new developments, or to influences from outside the main current.

• Much more might be said about the minutiae of phonetics, and some additional curiosities in sentence-stress will be dealt with under Syntax. In the field of accident and word-formation again more than one feature might be emphasized

as distinctly modern: the genitive singular *ladies* occurs several times in our texts; half a dozen examples of the third person singular of the present indicative in *s* crop up here and there, some in the poems but some in the prose texts too; the verbs with infinitive in *ate* are by no means unknown, the compound adjectives of the type *double-edged* grow and multiply under our author's hands; a few examples of the comparative *farther* might be quoted. But though on some of those points at least we could not quote any example earlier than those found in More's *Works*, none of them really represents the introduction of a new element into the language, and it is again as a witness of the things that were rather than as a moulder of the things that were to be that our author appears in the forms, as well as in the sounds, testified in his writings. We must turn to the internal aspects of his language, beginning with his syntax, if we wish to try and discover More's personal contribution to the common stock.

Here again, however, we must proceed with some caution, for there can be no question of fathering the introduction of this idiom or that upon our author with absolute certainty. The syntax of Early Modern English has not been written in detail, and even the general treatises we possess, admirable as they are, still fail to give us the complete picture we could desire. This is not the place to enlarge upon the immense difficulties of the task, the necessity authors feel of limiting themselves some way or other, the temptation that assails them to give up the historical aspect of language for the purely psychological, and finally the practical impossibility there is of discovering the exact moment when such or such a liberty taken by a writer, or perhaps several contemporary writers, with the tradition of English succeeded in becoming part and parcel of that tradition itself. And still, whatever all those difficulties may be, it is not out of place to try and make clear some few, some very few, points on which More's syntax seems to be decidedly on the modern side.

It should be pointed out in the first place that the instru-

ment he had to handle was still, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, a sorely imperfect one. To take as an example the question of the auxiliaries, those handy, nimble auxiliaries which now enable one to express the shades of one's thought almost *ad infinitum*, the language was still, in More's days, far from having evolved the delicate, consistent principles which have since prevailed. Our author himself combines *have* and *shall* with an infinitive:

. . . eny more distrust of my trowth and devotion toward yow than I have or shall during my life geve the cause . . .,

he uses *to be* with verbs that denote an action rather than a state:

they wene that they wer not far walked . . .,

and he makes what we to-day cannot call otherwise than further confusions between *will* and *shall*, *would* and *may*, *may* and *can*, *had* and *was*, *had* and *would*. . . . It is true that by the side of those 'mistakes' he frequently offers examples of the modern distinctions:

. . . By my trouthe syr quod he & it like your grace I can not tell you what I woulde haue done, but I can tell you what I shoulde haue done . . .,

and so on in a number of places. But if it cannot be asserted that the former sort is more largely represented than the latter, it must at least be admitted that the coexistence of the two evinces a somewhat chaotic state of things.

That More, nevertheless, applied his analytical mind to some points at least in order to take full advantage of the resources of his language is shown, among other proofs, by his remarks about the articles. Nowhere before him, so far as we know, had the importance of the distinction between the definite *the* and the indefinite *a* or *an* been emphasized—indeed nowhere had it been stated as it is in the following passage:

. . . Ye shall vnderstande that the latine tonge lacketh one certain article that y<sup>e</sup> greke hath, and which article in parte bothe our englyshe lāguage hath, & the frēche also, and diuerse other tonges, and it is in englishe thys worde, the. For where



as we haue two articles in english, a, and the: a or an (for bothe is one article, the tone before a consonant the other before a vowell) is cōmen to every thinge almost. But the, sygnifieth often times some speciall thing, and dyuideth it frō the generall. . . .

That is obvious enough, and one's first impression is that it could not be anything new, even in the days of More; but one has only to look up the verse of St. John, referred to in the passage just quoted, to notice that the text which had run *Eart þu witega* in Old English, *Art thou a prophet* in Wyclif and in Tindale, runs *Art thou the prophet* in Miles Coverdale's text, in the Douay translation, and in the Revised Version, the Authorized Version making the phrase still more definite by adopting the words *that prophet*.

. . . And in the latine tonge this thinge is lefte in doubte for lacke as I told you of an article correspondent to the geeke (*sic*) artycle, and to the englishe article the, & for y<sup>t</sup> cause some right holy men and very well learned, were for lacke of the greke tonge muche troubled with that place, how it might be vnderstanden right. But Tyndall by the greke tonge perceiuing the article, saw well inough that he should not haue translated it into the englishe, art thou a prophete, but art thou y<sup>e</sup> prophet, and thē were the matter open and playne. . . .

That is not the only place where our author proves that he knows how to avail himself of the possibilities of the modern definite article. Other specimens of his instinct in that respect are to be found in the use he makes of it, apparently in its emphatic form, indeed in the use he seems to make of the emphatic word in general. It is a pity the gramophone had not been invented in the sixteenth century, and we cannot say for certain to what extent that striking feature of modern English, the emphatic word, was or was not then what it is at the present day. Whatever the real state of things, and whatever the notions entertained about emphasis at a time when the word itself has not been recorded, is not it the echo of a modern voice we seem to hear when we read sentences like the following?—

If Tindal saye that he can so conster these texts as they shal not hurt his heresies: I deny not that he so may do, and I can to so conster them, that they shall not hurte the trouth. . . .

To say that the whole thing is inuisible, whereof he sayeth we may see euery part, is a thing aboue my pore wit, and I suppose aboue his to, to make his sayeng trew. . . .

. . . yet that the onely electes though they be a church, be y<sup>e</sup> church (which is the thing that he sholde proue) that hathe he neyther proued. . . .

More examples might be adduced, containing such words as *we, us, them, one, very, every, alone*, or a noun, or an adverb, or a verb—auxiliary or not. But to return to the articles. Is not *the man* a particularly modern phrase in such a depreciatory context as this:

. . . I suppose, that when the man was writting this, hys witte was walking toward the holy lande.

and is it not also a modern custom we have to deal with when we come across the indefinite *a* before a noun in apposition after a clause?—

. . . they might haue hadde poore men inoughe to bestowe that money vpon in reliefe necessar<sup>y</sup>e, that they there spent vpon the temple, a thinge as these mē cal it, voluntary. . . .

The earliest example of *the man* in a context similar to that quoted above that is given in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is dated 1674; as to the use of *a* before a noun in apposition after a clause we take it on Mätzner's authority that the phrase is exclusively modern.

It need hardly be added that the texts quoted, and those they represent, are by no means a proof that, on the one or two points chosen so far, More's syntax is identical with that of the present day. It would not be difficult to oppose other texts to those, in which the definite article is used by More contrary to modern habits, as when he writes

. . . she knit the browes . . .

. . . For so doth the mā ye wote well in the sleepe . . .,

\*where we should expect possessive adjectives. But the fact remains that in the majority of cases More's practice, or at least his tendency, with regard to the words taken as specimens, is in agreement with that to which we are accustomed,

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viz. that compared with that of the Middle Ages it makes for individualization and greater precision.

Precision is one of the qualities of modern syntax, but concision is another. One of the means by which it reaches it is undoubtedly the use it makes of the pregnant word. Thus the conjunction, the complete omission of which is in some cases allowable, may in others represent not only its own value but the whole conjunctive phrase which it is meant to introduce. The tendency exists in More, to an exaggerated degree:

... in the provision of such thinges as theyre slaknes hyther to mych hath hyndered the coen (*sic*) affayres,  
in which *as*, of course, stands for *as those in which*. The same applies to *that*, the missing words being here those which should come not after, but before, the conjunction:

This Webbe ... was by dyuers heretykes detected vnto me, that he had sold and vsed continually to sell many of these heretikes bokes. ...

Though neither kind of turn has survived within recent centuries, both may be said to illustrate the search for brevity which, through many alternatives, has been on the whole, and remains, one of the leading characteristics of English syntax.

A peculiar illustration of brevity, and one that does not seem to be forgotten, chiefly in familiar language, is given by More in the use he makes of 'that versatile mercurial word', as Mr. Belloc somewhere puts it, 'our plain *and*':

... though sometyme it hap that a man be accused or endyghted of malice, or of some likelihod which happed him of chaunce and not his faut therin, yet happeth it ...

What words are to be supplied in that and similar texts we leave it to the reader to determine, but we are in no doubt that popular feeling easily supplies what may be required in such cases. The more genteel *and* *he* is no less known to More than the plain *and*, but of this we have noted only one example:

... that ther shuld be but one prince ... and he to contynue ... ,

18 SOME ASPECTS OF SIR THOMAS MORE'S ENGLISH  
and we are on more familiar ground when we meet the curious  
*and* invested with the full dignity of *who* or *which*:

Here seemeth a goodlye thyng and is indeed very deuclishe. . . .

. . . as the churche of Christe is but one so there be of those  
a vengeable maynye, and be not comprehended vnder any one  
churche . . . .

where *and* is as easily intelligible as in Shakespeare's

Here's a young maid with travel much oppress'd  
And faints for succour.

The use may be old, but we understand it is more modern  
still, though recent authorities apparently fail to record it.

We will not give way to the temptation to show that More  
also knows the inverse phenomenon, viz. the use of *which* =  
*and*, of which Dickens, for instance, offers examples. We had  
rather draw the reader's attention to a specially pregnant use  
of the conjunctive pronoun, equivalent to preposition plus  
pronoun, which need not be explained exclusively by the  
tradition of the old cases:

. . . and no man that heard hym left to bear vs wytnesse what he  
said,

. . . all hys teachyng of knowledge where some of the church be,  
without y<sup>e</sup> knowledge who they be . . .

. . . yf God were not . . . at his libertie stil in the gouernaunce  
and teachyng of hys churche, what he wyl have belieued and  
what he wyll have done . . .

Here again, unless we are mistaken, we may have a tradi-  
tional turn, but a more modern one still.

It is not surprising that the chapter of the verb should  
offer particularly striking specimens of the pregnant word..  
The absolute construction of a transitive verb occurs four  
times at least in the case of *to fret* in which, as far as we  
know, it is new or at least recent:

. . . so doth the enuious parson, fret, fume, & burne in his owne  
hert . . . ,

and we are not aware that *to drink one's self drunk* has been  
recorded before More. But the salient point here unquestion-

ably is the convenient—and very modern—use to which More puts his postpositions:

. . . Tyll he dispute,  
His money cleane away . . .

. . . till with her daunsynge she daused of Saynt Iohns head . . .

Constructions of the same kind might be quoted with the verbs *to accurse out of*, *to bless away* (and *out*), *to call back*, *to drink down*, *to face out*, *to muse out*, of none of which an earlier example has been recorded. Well may we understand the compliment here paid to More by his recent French biographer, the Abbé Brémond, on that secret of English prose by which, as he says, thanks to the postposition, a new sense of the verb is formed which makes it at the same time so precise, and so full of meaning—and so untranslatable.

Having thus attempted to make it clear that some features at least of the modern English framework were not unknown to More, we can now examine the element with which he has helped to fill it—a task which the incomparable lists of words, phrases, dates, and texts put at our disposal by the *Oxford English Dictionary* will make infinitely easier than the one immediately preceding.

Perhaps some readers expect us to repeat here the usual restriction about what actually was as against what we know. Though we have already made it before touching our author's syntax, and though we are here on far safer ground than we were a few pages back, we need not hesitate to admit once more that there is a difference between being the originator of a word or phrase or only its propagator, and that for all our wealth of information we may frequently mistake the latter for the former. It is only subject to those limitations, therefore, that we shall consider More as a creator, or an importer, of words in the following pages.

Before launching into the inquiry, it is amusing to try and realize to what extent the English vocabulary had already attained its present state about the beginning of the sixteenth century. A glance at this page or that of the Folio of 1557—

so incomparably more reliable for the purpose than the early word-compilations themselves—is instructive in that respect.

More seems to find it quite natural to remind us of our *breakfast*, or to warn us against eating *ratsbane*, or to conjure up the idea of a *costermonger* covering his basket, or to point out to us that the world is not a *football*, or to draw our attention to his *spectacles*; on one occasion, when wanting to encourage us to make a poor man work in our garden rather than give him alms, he tells us that by our alms the poor man would run the risk of living idle and turning a *loiterer*. No doubt the words we have italicized, and a number of similar ones, though none of them apparently was old when he wrote them, were practically as familiar then as they are now. Equally current, if not more so, at least among the better educated class, were terms of a less popular kind, particularly the law terms, which would naturally occur to More and which seem to have meant for him exactly what they mean to-day, such as *action*, *to arraign*, *indictment*, *oyer*, *suit*, and others. To return to the more general class, it is not only, of course, the words themselves but also their new acceptations and developments that are of importance; of these interesting examples are not lacking in our Folio. By the side of *scabbed* human beings, and animals, and plants, *scabbed sheep* in the figurative sense had long received the freedom of the language; a *passion* had gone through a string of successive or simultaneous senses, the chief of which had been the passion of Our Lord, martyrdom, a vehement emotion, an outburst of anger—and had reached that of a fit of anger; the verb *to desire* was no longer limited to the sense of 'to wish', but also meant 'to express a wish'; the verb *to milk* had come to apply not only to milkmaids but to swindlers as well. The English vocabulary was undoubtedly pretty rich already four hundred years ago if we consider the crude words: after a rough calculation based upon the first hundred full separate entries listed in the great *Dictionary* under each of the letters *a*, *g*, *r*, *t*, taken as specimens, it represented about one-fifth of what it is now—but how much richer if we consider the uses to which the words were put!

Let us now turn to More's contribution and examine its various aspects. There is a class of words which, before all others, appeals to the lovers of English, viz. the clear-cut units, often monosyllabic, which strike the ear with their sharp consonantic distinctness. More frequently than not they belong to the Germanic stock, but it is not the stock which matters so much as the English garb, and *jest* and *musty* which are originally Romance are just as good representatives of the class as *lift* or *tub* which are not; in fact some of them, such as *hiss* or *swap*, are neither Germanic nor Romance, but merely 'root-creations'. It is no wonder that we can at least suspect More to have coined, or half-coined, a few words of that class, though in almost each individual case there is some additional restriction to be added to the general caution mentioned above. It is easy to point out that *to peddle*, or *to pule*, or *to fimble*, or *to shuffle*, or *to taunt* have not been found in any texts previous to those we are considering, but then examples of *pedlar*, which may be connected with *to peddle*, have been traced back to a century and a half earlier; *to pule*, which may be More's creation, may also be an imitation from the French; *to fimble* sounds like a mere grade of the series *fimble—famble—fumble*, the last two members of which have been recorded before our period; and *taunt* was also known before it, at least as an adjective meaning 'haughty'. As for *to shuffle (up)*, the sense in which More employs it, viz. 'to patch up', has not lived. It is worth while, anyway, to note here a few curious terms: *to jumper* in the sense of 'to harmonize', *to tolter* in that of 'to move unsteadily', also the substantive *sleight* meaning 'indifference'—the first two because More offers isolated, or almost isolated, examples of them, and the third because our text is nearly two hundred years older than the first quoted in the columns of the *Dictionary*:

... let vs yet further see how his diffinicion of the churche and  
hys heresies, will iumper and agree together among themselfe.

... whan he catcheth once a fall, ... there lyeth he still  
tumblyng and toltryng in myre. ...

... lest his ouer bold hope may happe to stretch into presūpcion,  
and occasion of sleight regarding sin ...

Cannot we regret that the first two, to say nothing of the third, did not become, and remain, current?

A remarkable case is that of the verb *to scud*, not known before the sixteenth century, though of this word in particular we read that 'it may have been much older in colloquial use'. Another is that of the substantive *glade*, both in its proper and in its figurative senses; it is curious that the latter use should be the earlier of the two. We are here tempted to add the expressive *dolt*, but then it is not More's own, occurring, as it does, not in his English works but in the English translation of the part of the *Treatise vpon the passion of Chryste* (written by him in Latin) which Mrs. Basset inserted in the Folio of 1557. It is comforting, at all events, for the admirers of More's originality to think that, if he had nothing to do with the introduction of that word into English, it is at least the More School that seems responsible for it.

After the root-creations, or half-creations pure and simple, a few compounds, chiefly of the reduplicating kind, tell their own tale. We find in More's pages not only *bibble-babble*, *pit-pat*, *hucker-mucker*, the originals of which are not far to seek, but also *beetle-blind*, *far-fet* (*far-fetched* is somewhat later), *key-cold*, which are more likely to bear his own stamp. However much older in colloquial use these, and the words quoted before, may have been when our author wrote them, is not the use of the popular process illustrated here, in works some of which at least may lay some claim to be called literature, a proof of a deep-set instinct in agreement with the fundamental tendencies of his language? The instinct is perhaps the more noticeable as it is not the popular but the learned element that one naturally looks for at first in the writings of a scholar and a favourite child of the Renaissance.

On the French element we need not say much. Though it remained a rich storehouse of words even after the Middle Ages, and though More himself actually wrote a few good lines in French in *The Boke of the fayre Gentyllwoman*, what we read in his epigrams does not make it likely at first sight that he should have felt inclined to borrow much from that source:



. . . nimirum placet,  
 Verbis tribus, si quid loquatur Gallicis,  
 . . . Sic ergo linguam ille et Latinam Gallice,  
 Et Gallice linguam sonat Britannicam . . .  
 Et Gallice omnem, praeter unam Gallicam.

To put it in other words, he must have been of the opinion of Ascham, namely that 'bothe wyne, ale and beere . . . be all good, every one taken by hym selfe alone'. In fact, we should find it difficult to quote from his works many new words to which a French origin can be ascribed. We can indeed glean *absurdity, function, precision, to qualify, to taunt*, some of which are particularly interesting because our dates for them are earlier than those given by the *Oxford Dictionary*:

Is it not this cōpany & congregaciō of al these nacions, y<sup>t</sup> without . . . precysion from the remenant, professe the name and faith of christ ?

. . . the conflict of the diuers qualified elemētes tēpered in our body, continually laboring ech to vanquish other,

but then we should not venture to go much farther. One word which we feel sure will endear our author to the readers of this essay far more than all the rest, to wit the word *marmalade*, is also given by the *Oxford Dictionary* as of French origin—but then for linguistic and other reasons we suspect marmalade to have come not from France but from Spain.<sup>1</sup>

When we referred to the learned element above, we meant, of course, the Latin—classical or medieval—vocabulary, which could not but be very familiar to an author whose writings are partly in Latin. On coming to this aspect of our subject, though we are confronted with lists longer than those we have had to deal with before, we should beware of applying the word 'learned' to all of More's borrowings. The appearance

<sup>1</sup> In spite of our efforts we have not yet been able to discover what brought marmalade into use in England about 1520. It is amusing in any case to compare with the following text from *Utopia* (1516): . . . *mulieres gravidae picem & seuum corrupto gustu melle mellitius arbitrātur*, the following one from *De quatuor novissimis* (1522): . . . *some women with child haue such fond lust that thei had leuer eate terre than tryacle, & rather pitch than marmelade*. . . .

of some is no doubt pedantic and Johnsonese, and we are not surprised that common use has long rejected such words as *to allect* (and *allective*), or *to insimulate*, though it has retained such others as *to adhibit*, *antiphrasis*, *concomitance*, *irrefragable*, and *sorority*; but others again have unquestionably met a much-felt need, and we are not surprised either that the verbs *to anticipate*, *to dissipate*, *to exaggerate*, *to extenuate*, *to insinuate*, as well as the substantives *monopoly*, or *paradox*, or *pretext*, are fully current. It may seem strange to realize that the word *fact*, a word so simple and so frequent that it might almost have figured among the native, or quasi-native, terms mentioned above, should have to be added to the number, but then—it is a fact.

. . . albeit our Lorde dooeth suffer hys church to erre in the knoweledge of a facte or dede doone among men. . . .

If we now extend our view to the broader field of compound and chiefly of derived words, we obtain, of course, a far more important total. The compounds supply us with the expressive *blockhead*, the convenient *hair-breadth*, the peculiar *text-hand*, the indispensable *playfellow*, and the puzzling *grass-widow*. The derived nouns appear in denser numbers, *co-heir* and *foreknowledge* coming first under the prefixes, while under the suffixes we find names of agents: *bungler*, *detector*, *co-operant*; abstract nouns: *acceptance*, *connotation*, *obstruction*, *damnability*, *clerkliness*, *success*, and other nouns including *monosyllable*, *interrogatory*, and the word *vocabulary* itself, for which we have to thank More as for the others. The other parts of speech are even better provided and the native formation has a greater part to play in them. By the side of *incorporeal*, *endurable*, *mootable*, *impenitent*, *combustible*, *comprehensible*, *frivolous*, all of which have a more or less Romance appearance, More presented his language with the indispensable *drowsy*, and the amusing *apish*, and the exquisite *daughterly* which reminds us of charming Margaret Roper kissing her father on Tower-wharf, as *playfellow* reminded us of the little princes beguiling their anxious hours inside the Tower, and that other delightful find *elderly* which,

though it has no personal association with Sir Thomas in his text,

... of olde they vsed commonly to chose wel elderly mē to be priestes . . .

reminds us of himself surrounded by his family at Chelsea. The verbs in their turn have to offer us in the native section *to forefigure*, *to misgive*, *to misremember*, *to mistranslate*—in the other one *to detest*, *to entangle*, *to explain*.<sup>1</sup> Our lists do not claim to be exhaustive.

The creation, or the introduction, of fresh linguistic elements is sure to entitle a writer to the gratitude of the lovers of his language, but the praise he deserves for the use he may make of the existing material at his disposal is hardly less. The word *metaphor* cannot, any more than the word *trope*, be claimed as due to More, but one is often struck by the instinct with which he coins metaphors. An *itch* is an itch in his works as everywhere else, but is also a hankering after something, and, talking about an itch, it is perhaps a pity that the verb *to tickle* used by him when referring to Romans vii. 5—

... as the reliques of original sinne, whereby we be tieded towarde great actuall deadely sinnes . . .

could no longer be used in the same manner. The verb *to inveigh*, first used in the sense of 'to introduce', takes under his pen that of 'raising a protest', the only one that has been current for centuries; he makes *open* refer to a man's disposition and *faithful* to a translator's method, he employs *to fume* of a person giving way to anger;<sup>2</sup> he declares that he does not intend . . . to pin his soul at another man's back. The reader need not be reminded of the particularly expressive character of some at least of the words just quoted; he is

<sup>1</sup> To put it more exactly: *to detest* and *to explain* are new verbs belonging to roots already imported in English. The substantive *detestation* is known as far back as 1432, and *explanation* as far back as 1386.

<sup>2</sup> The example occurs in the *De quatuor nouissimis* (1522). The first example of the substantive *fume* in the sense of 'anger' in *O.E.D.* bears the same date.

not likely to disagree with us if we add that *bigly* in the sense of 'boastfully' (older than *big* in the sense of 'boastful') or *lumpish* in the sense of 'melancholy' are not less felicitous.

Is it worth while to go farther and insist upon the way in which More avails himself of those old resources of language so dear to the schoolmaster—metonymy and synecdoche? We may at least quote one or two examples of the former. The use of the adjective *clear* referring to a person, as in

... anye of those articles wherein euery good christen man is clere ...

is an excellent metonymy—of the class that expresses the cause for the effect, and one that, we believe, has become of pretty frequent occurrence in the language. That of the substantive *frailty* preceded by the indefinite article, as in

So may a man speake very lewde ... woordes ... of a passion and of a frayltie ...

is another of the variety in which the abstract quality stands for a specimen of it, and seems hardly less current. Other cases in point are *allegory* and *cavillation*, meaning in each instance 'a specimen of the phenomenon', while *conjecture* once represents in our text a third variety, to wit 'the working of a faculty' for the faculty itself. The principle of synecdoche More applies to the word *bush*, when, taking the whole for the part, he makes it mean 'a branch of ivy hung as a vintner's sign', and to the word *natural* when, substituting the qualifying word for the word qualified, he employs it to describe one naturally deficient in intellect. We might look for more illustrations of the two principles, and of other figures of speech as well; but then is it not sufficient to point out that when coining them he is merely following the natural bent of language? What is more remarkable is that when he has to name the process he uses, he more than once takes care to put in an apologizing word or two so as not to be taxed with pedantry. Thus about the periphrasis:

Lo there haue I fallen on a fayre fygure vnwar, that is I trowe called periphrasis,

and about hyperbole:

. . . he sayd it onely by a maner of speking which is amonge lerned men called *Yperbole*, for the more vehemēt expressing of a matter . . .

Modern analysis has made us familiar with a process—concatenation, if we may use the expression—which consists in adopting for a word more and more specialized, or generalized, applications on its way, with the final result that the starting-point may be entirely lost sight of. We come across such words in the pages of More at various stages of their history. The starting-point is clearly visible in the word *meeting* in its political acceptation, of which *The history of king Richard the thirde* offers the first known example, but the same cannot be said of some others. More has heard of

. . . a bed of Snakes [that] was . . . founde out & broken . . .

and he talks about errors subtly *couched*, though the former word had previously been reserved to persons—or plants, and the latter had been until his time reserved to more material connotations; he writes of some

. . . that haue engroced into their handes . . . other mennes goodes . . .

in which the original meaning of *to engross* (in gross) represents but part of its total sense; he describes a defendant as laying no *exception* to many a witness, in which *exception* keeps neither its etymological sense nor the intermediate sense of 'reservation' but is practically equivalent to 'objection'. Perhaps the two most characteristic examples of words that occur in a new sense under More's pen are the adjective *fain* meaning 'compelled' (after starting from the meaning 'glad' and passing through that of 'glad under the circumstances') and the almost homophonous substantive *fine* meaning 'a sum imposed as the penalty for an offence', after going through the successive stages: 'conclusion', 'agreement', and 'composition-fee'.

Before we leave the words proper a final remark may be made here about the use More makes of a few adjectives. That the adjective is a particularly delicate part of speech is a well-known fact. As Earle wrote in *The Philology of the English*

*Tongue*, 'it involves a greater chance of making a mistake, or of coming into collision with the judgment of others, than any other . . .'; from which it follows that 'there is a shyness in the utterance of adjectives', at least of 'such as can at all carry the air of being the speaker's own . . .'. Now it seems to us that some adjectives do carry the air of being More's own. *Solemn* is not a case in point, though it is apparently one of his favourites, because the use of it is earlier. Neither is the more characteristic *peremptory*, though he actually supplies the first examples of it that are known, at least in a work meant for the general public, because, after all, it is not really a popular word. But then cannot we say that *jolly* and *pretty* in their ironical sense are both popular, and that they both belong to him? Apparently we can:

Here shall you see Iudas play the ioylye marchaunt I trowe. . . .

Maister Masker maketh vs a prety shorte crede nowe . . .

The last words quoted bring us back to the point from which we started, namely the popular element without which a writer can hardly expect to have a hold upon the many. If we now cast a glance at a few more uses of current words and at a certain number of set phrases the first examples of which are, as far as we know, due to More's pen, we shall perhaps have made it clear that not only could he not fail to have a hold upon the many in his time, but that he has kept it to the present day.

There is no lack of variety in the list. A short, all but worn-out word such as *like* has assumed a particularly familiar—nay, even colloquial—sense in a context like the following:

That woord was like Eue . . .

Then there are some collocations such as *I cannot help it, to make the best of, of a sudden*, which, though more or less abstract in their component parts, cannot fail to be associated with the everyday occurrences in people's lives:

. . . ther is none other remedi but you must let him haue it: better would I wish it, but I cannot helpe it.

. . . we shall geasse at hys mynde as nere as we canne, and make the beste of hys matter . . .

... a sermon ... not of a sodayne brayed, but sore studied and penned ...

Others, again, are more life-like in themselves, because it is easy even to unimaginative minds to see the image that lurks behind their apparently colourless parts. Of these we can at least mention *by the way* (used long before More but not in its figurative sense of 'incidentally'), *to come short of*, *to lay open*.

But yet consider one thing by the waye, that ye missetake him not ...

... or els I wene he wyll come short of hys whole sūme, and lacke fiue of his hūdred ...

... so that ye mai see some of the fauts of hys exposecion by them selfe, ... & hys solucions auoyded by thē selfe, & the notable notes that he maketh of my notable repugnances last of al layed open to you by themselfe ...

But by far the largest portion have that spontaneous, unmistakable, concrete ring which, when it does not rather appeal to the ear as in *to harp upon a string*, sounds like an invitation to visualize things. More talks about telling some thing *to some one's teeth*, or showing another person a thing *with a wet finger*, about *one driven to the hard wall*, or one *that cannot see the wood for the trees*:

... yet would he never be angry with thē, though they would neither believe y<sup>t</sup> he told thē, nor do y<sup>t</sup> he bode thē: but tel him wel and plainly to hys teth, y<sup>t</sup> if he woulde be believed or obeyed, he shoulde haue made hys apostles wryte it.

But and yf ye woulde cease youre persecucion once, and lette them liue in reste, ye shoulde see them flocke together so fast, y<sup>t</sup> they should sone shew you the churche with a wete finger.

... then may euery chylde see that he is drienen to the harde walle, and fayne to seeke a shamefull shyfte.

... And as he might tell vs, that of Poules churche we maye well see the stones, but we can not see the church. And then we may well tell him agayne, that he can not see the wood for the trees ...

The last two phrases, it is worth noticing, are given in the *Oxford Dictionary* as occurring for the first time in John Heywood's *Proverbs* in 1546. Here, as in the few other cases

in which we have quoted our texts in full, we disagree with the great *Dictionary*, but if it has committed a fault at all we venture to call it a *felix culpa*, as it opens us one more vista upon the More School, where Heywood was one of the young people More loved to have about him, as Professor A. W. Reed recently reminded us. Other phrases suggest to us other associations. While every one of us is free to connect *the needle one looks (for) in a meadow* and *the grammar no more like to faith than an apple is to an oyster* with what experience of his life he chooses, nobody can help associating *a tale of a tub* with Jonathan Swift and the story of the three brothers, and More's opponent conveying himself *out of the frying pan into the fire* with Charles Dickens and Mr. Winkle. But we refrain. More of our author's 'new phrases' could be quoted, no doubt, but perhaps enough has been said to show his power of handling the elements of his language and making them effective.

It is not intended in the present essay to push the inquiry farther and show how the materials reviewed above—turns, words, and phrases—combine under More's pen with those his language possessed before to make up a new whole, viz. his personal style. Neither does it enter into our plan to investigate to what extent More's language may have influenced that of his contemporaries and successors, whether inside, or outside, the More School. It falls more immediately under our task, it seems to us, to point out how far the results here arrived at might be improved, and how far they may be considered as final.

One way obviously points to progress in the knowledge of More's English, to wit an analysis of Early Modern English more detailed, because more limited, than the gigantic inquiry which the Oxford University Press has put at our disposal. That such an analysis is being prepared through its medium is well known, and it is with confidence that those interested in the undertaking are looking forward to its results. But then are there not other ways of breaking new ground? When the present writer submitted, now over twenty years ago, his *Essai sur la langue de Sir Thomas More*



*d'après ses œuvres anglaises* to the University of Paris, he admitted on the last page that the full value of More's English could be but imperfectly estimated because the English of More's contemporaries had not yet been sufficiently reconnoitred. Why should things stand in that respect as they stood twenty years ago? Are there not in the universities of the world numerous young men and women in search of subjects for future degrees? To those who may choose to tackle the language of Tindale, or Fisher, or Elyot, to say nothing of others, an abundant harvest of interesting facts may be promised; may there be some among the lovers of English that will take up the suggestion before long.

It does not seem likely, however, that the importance of More's contribution to his language will suffer much from a comparison between him and other Tudor writers. And the reason is not far to seek. To his instinct for the popular side of his language, to his learning and culture, which, while making for the enrichment of it, knew how to keep within tactful bounds, to his aptitude for using the traditional processes which, by his skilful handling of them, he could make fruitful of new means of expression, did not he add that sense of humour which is sure to impart life to everything it comes into contact with? It would be strange indeed if Sir Thomas turned out to have touched the English language without improving it.

J. DELCOURT

[NOTE.—The foregoing study is a summary of a few chapters of the *Essai* mentioned on p. 30, revised in the light of recent investigation; special use has, of course, been made of the last volumes of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (including its *Supplement*), which were not available in 1914. To save space the texts quoted, most of which are taken from *The workes of Sir Thomas More* (1557), are given without references; should the latter be required the reader will find at least the greater part of them in the pages of the *Essai*. The spelling and punctuation of the original have been scrupulously respected.]

## A NOTE ON THE VERSE OF JOHN MILTON

WHILE it must be admitted that Milton is a very great poet indeed, it is something of a puzzle to decide in what his greatness consists. On analysis, the marks against him appear both more numerous and more significant than the marks to his credit. As a man, he is antipathetic. Either from the moralist's point of view, or from the theologian's point of view, or from the psychologist's point of view, or from that of the political philosopher, or judging by the ordinary standards of likeableness in human beings, Milton is unsatisfactory. The doubts which I have to express about him are more serious than these. His greatness as a poet has been sufficiently celebrated, though I think largely for the wrong reasons, and without the proper reservations. His misdeeds as a poet have been called attention to, as by Mr. Ezra Pound, but usually in passing. What seems to me necessary is to assert at the same time his greatness—in that what he could do well he did better than any one else has ever done it—and the serious charges to be made against him, in respect of the deterioration—the peculiar kind of deterioration—to which he subjected the language.

(Many people will agree that a man may be a great artist, and yet have a bad influence. There is more of Milton's influence in the badness of the bad verse of the eighteenth century than of anybody's else: he certainly did more harm than Dryden and Pope, and perhaps a good deal of the obloquy which has fallen on these two poets, especially the latter, because of their influence, ought to be transferred to Milton. But to put the matter simply in terms of 'bad influence' is not necessarily to bring a serious charge: because a good deal of the responsibility, when we state the problem in these terms, may devolve on the eighteenth-century poets themselves for being such bad poets that they were incapable of being influenced except for ill. There is a good deal more to the charge against Milton than this; and it appears a good

deal more serious if we affirm that Milton's poetry could *only* be an influence for the worse, upon any poet whatever. It is more serious, also, if we affirm that Milton's bad influence may be traced much farther than the eighteenth century, and much farther than upon bad poets: if we say that it was an influence against which we still have to struggle.

There is a large class of persons, including some who appear in print as critics, who regard any censure upon a 'great' poet as a breach of the peace, as an act of wanton iconoclasm, or even hoodlumism. The kind of derogatory criticism that I have to make upon Milton is not intended for such persons, who cannot understand that it is more important, in some vital respects, to be a *good* poet than to be a *great* poet; and of what I have to say I consider that the only jury of judgment is that of the ablest poetical practitioners of my own time.

The most important fact about Milton, for my purposes, is his blindness. I do not mean that to go blind in middle life is itself enough to determine the whole nature of a man's poetry. Blindness must be considered in conjunction with Milton's personality and character, and the peculiar education which he received. It must also be considered in connexion with his devotion to, and expertness in, the art of music. Had Milton been a man of very keen senses—I mean of *all* the five senses—his blindness would not have mattered so much. But for a man whose sensuousness, such as it was, had been withered early by book-learning, and whose gifts were naturally aural, it mattered a great deal. It would seem, indeed, to have helped him to concentrate on what he could do best.

(At no period is the visual imagination conspicuous in Milton's poetry.) It would be as well to give a few illustrations of what I mean by visual imagination. From *Macbeth*:

This guest of summer,  
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve  
By his loved mansionry that the heaven's breath  
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,  
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird

Hath made his pendant bed and procreant cradle:  
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed  
The air is delicate.

It may be observed that such an image, as well as another familiar quotation from a little later in the same play,

Light thickens, and the crow  
Makes wing to the rooky wood

not only offer something to the eye, but, so to speak, to the common sense. I mean that they convey the feeling of being in a particular place at a particular time. The comparison with Shakespeare offers another indication of the peculiarity of Milton. With Shakespeare, far more than with any other poet in English, the combinations of words offer perpetual novelty; they enlarge the meaning of the individual words joined: thus 'procreant cradle', 'rooky wood'. In comparison, Milton's images do not give this sense of particularity, nor are the separate words developed in significance. His language is, if one may use the term without disparagement, *artificial* and *conventional*.

O'er the smooth *enamelled* green . . .

. . . paths of this drear wood  
The nodding horror of whose shady brows  
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger.

('Shady brow' here is a diminution of the value of the two words from their use in the line from *Dr. Faustus*

Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows.)

The imagery in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* is all general:

While the ploughman near at hand,  
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,  
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,  
And the mower whets his scythe,  
And every shepherd tells his tale  
Under the hawthorn in the dale.

It is not a particular ploughman, milkmaid, and shepherd that Milton sees (as Wordsworth might see them); the sensuous effect of these verses is entirely on the ear, and is joined to the concepts of ploughman, milkmaid, and shepherd.

Even in his most mature work, Milton does not infuse new life into the word, as Shakespeare does.

The sun to me is dark  
And silent as the moon,  
When she deserts the night  
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.

Here *interlunar* is certainly a stroke of genius, but is merely combined with 'vacant' and 'cave', rather than giving and receiving life from them. Thus it is not so unfair, as it might at first appear, to say that Milton writes English like a dead language. The criticism has been made with regard to his involved syntax. But a tortuous style, when its peculiarity is aimed at precision (as with Henry James), is not necessarily a dead one; only when the complication is dictated by a demand of verbal music, instead of by any demand of sense.

Thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers,  
If these magnific titles yet remain  
Not merely titular, since by decree  
Another now hath to himself engrossed  
All power, and us eclipsed under the name  
Of King anointed, for whom all this haste  
Of midnight march, and hurried meeting here,  
This only to consult how we may best  
With what may be devised of honours new  
Receive him coming to receive from us  
Knee-tribute yet unpaid, prostration vile,  
Too much to one, but double how endured,  
To one and to his image now proclaimed?

With which compare:

However, he didn't mind thinking that if Cissy should prove all that was likely enough their having a subject in common couldn't but practically conduce; though the moral of it all amounted rather to a portent, the one that Haughty, by the same token, had done least to reassure him against, of the extent to which the native jungle harboured the female specimen and to which its ostensible cover, the vast level of mixed growths stirred wavingly in whatever breeze, was apt to be identifiable but as an agitation of the latest redundant thing in ladies' hats.

This quotation, taken almost at random from *The Ivory*

*Tower*, is not intended to represent Henry James at any hypothetical 'best', any more than the noble passage from *Paradise Lost* is meant to be Milton's hypothetical worst. The question is the difference of intention, in the elaboration of styles both of which depart so far from lucid simplicity. The sound, of course, is never irrelevant, and the style of James certainly depends for its effect a good deal on the sound of a voice, James's own, painfully explaining. But the complication, with James, is due to a determination not to simplify, and in that simplification lose any of the real intricacies and by-paths of mental movement; whereas the complication of a Miltonic sentence is an active complication, a complication deliberately introduced into what was a previously simplified and abstract thought. The dark angel here is not *thinking* or conversing, but making a speech carefully prepared for him; and the arrangement is for the sake of musical value, not for significance. A straightforward utterance, as of a Homeric or Dantesque character, would make the speaker very much more real to us; but reality is no part of the intention. We have in fact to read such a passage not analytically, to get the poetic impression. (I am not suggesting that Milton has no idea to convey, which he regards as important: only that the syntax is determined by the musical significance, by the auditory imagination, rather than by the attempt to follow actual speech or thought.) It is at least more nearly possible to distinguish the pleasure which arises from the *noise*, from the pleasure due to other elements, than with the verse of Shakespeare, in which the auditory imagination and the imagination of the other senses are more nearly fused, and fused together with the thought. The result with Milton is, in one sense of the word, *rhetoric*. That term is not intended to be derogatory. This kind of 'rhetoric' is not necessarily bad in itself, though likely to be bad in its influence; and it may be considered bad in relation to the historical life of a language as a whole. (I have said elsewhere that the living English which was Shakespeare's became split up into two components one of which was exploited by Milton and the other by Dryden. Of the two, I still think

Dryden's development the healthier, because it was Dryden who preserved, so far as it was preserved at all, the tradition of conversational language in poetry: and I might add that it seems to me easier to get back to healthy language from Dryden than it is to get back to it from Milton. For what such a generalization is worth, Milton's influence on the eighteenth century was much more deplorable than Dryden's.

If several very important reservations and exceptions are made, I think that it is not unprofitable to compare Milton's development with that of Mr. James Joyce. The initial similarities are strong musical tastes and abilities, followed by musical training, wide and curious knowledge, gift for acquiring languages, and remarkable powers of memory perhaps fortified by defective vision. The important difference is that Mr. Joyce's imagination is not naturally of so purely auditory a type as Milton's. In his early work, and at least in part of *Ulysses*, there is visual and other imagination of the highest kind; and I may be mistaken in thinking that the later part of *Ulysses* shows a turning from the visible world to draw rather on the resources of phantasmagoria. In any case, one may suppose that the replenishment of visual imagery during later years has been insufficient; so that what I find in *Work in Progress* is an auditory imagination abnormally sharpened at the expense of the visual. There is still a little to be seen, and what there is to see is worth looking at. And I would repeat that with Mr. Joyce this development seems to me largely due to circumstances: whereas Milton may be said never to have seen anything. For Milton, therefore, the concentration on sound was wholly a benefit. Indeed, I find, in reading *Paradise Lost*, that I am happiest where there is least to visualize. The eye is not shocked in his twilit Hell as it is in the Garden of Eden, where I for one can get pleasure from the verse only by the deliberate effort not to visualize Adam and Eve and their surroundings.

I am not suggesting any close parallel between the 'rhetoric' of Milton and the later style of Mr. Joyce. It is a different music; and Joyce always maintains some contact

with the conversational tone. But it may prove to be equally a blind alley for the future development of the language: being preferable to Milton's, in the respect that it cannot be imitated.

A disadvantage of the rhetorical style appears to be, that a dislocation takes place, through the hypertrophy of the auditory imagination at the expense of the visual and tactile, so that the inner meaning is separated from the surface, and tends to become something occult, or at least without effect upon the reader until fully understood. To extract everything possible from *Paradise Lost*, it would seem necessary to read it in two different ways, first solely for the sound, and second for the sense. The full beauty of his long periods can hardly be enjoyed while we are wrestling with the meaning as well; and for the pleasure of the ear the meaning is hardly necessary, except in so far as certain key-words indicate the emotional tone of the passage. Now Shakespeare, or Dante, will bear innumerable readings, but at each reading all the elements of appreciation can be present. There is no interruption between the surface that these poets present to you and the core. While, therefore, I cannot pretend to have penetrated to any 'secret' of these poets, I feel that such appreciation of their work as I am capable of points in the right direction; whereas I cannot feel that my appreciation of Milton leads anywhere outside of the mazes of sound. That, I feel, would be the matter for a separate study, like that of Blake's prophetic books; it might be well worth the trouble, but would have little to do with my interest in the poetry. So far as I perceive anything, it is a glimpse of a theology that I find in large part repellent, expressed through a mythology which would have better been left in the Book of Genesis, upon which Milton has not improved. There seems to me to be a division, in Milton, between the philosopher or theologian and the poet; and, for the latter, I suspect also that this concentration upon the auditory imagination leads to at least an occasional levity. I can enjoy the roll of

. . . Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can  
And Samarchand by Oxus, Temir's throne.



To Paquin of Sinaean kings, and thence  
 To Agra and Lahor of great Mogul  
 Down to the golden Chersonese, or where  
 The Persian in Ecbatan sate, or since  
 In Hispahan, or where the Russian Ksar  
 In Mosco, or the Sultan in Bizance,  
 Turchestan-born . . .

and the rest of it, but I feel that this is not serious poetry, not poetry fully occupied about its business, but rather a solemn game. More often, admittedly, Milton uses proper names in moderation, to obtain the same effect of magnificence with them as does Marlowe—nowhere perhaps better than in the passage from *Lycidas*:

Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,  
 Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide  
 Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world;  
 Or whether thou to our moist vows deny'd,  
 Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,  
 Where the great vision of the guarded Mount  
 Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold . . .

than which, for the single effect of grandeur of sound, there is nothing finer in poetry.

I make no attempt to appraise the 'greatness' of Milton in relation to poets who seem to me more comprehensive and better balanced; it has seemed to me more fruitful for the present to press the parallel between *Paradise Lost* and *Work in Progress*; and both Milton and Mr. Joyce are so exalted in their own kinds, in the whole of literature, that the only writers with whom to compare them are writers who have attempted something very different. Our views about Mr. Joyce, in any case, must remain at the present time tentative. But there are two attitudes both of which are necessary and right to adopt in considering the work of any poet. One is when we isolate him, when we try to understand the rules of his own game, adopt his own point of view: the other, perhaps less usual, is when we measure him by outside standards, most pertinently by the standards of language and of something called Poetry, in our own

language and in the whole history of European literature. It is from the second point of view that my objections to Milton are made: it is from this point of view that we can go so far as to say that, although his work realizes superbly one important element in poetry, he may still be considered as having done damage to the English language from which it has not wholly recovered.

T. S. ELIOT.

## THE ATTACKS ON DRYDEN<sup>1</sup>

‘And as their Judgments are different, as to his writings; so are their Censures no less repugnant to the Managery of his Life, some excusing what these condemn, and some exploding what those commend: so that we can scarce find them agreed in any one thing, save this, that he was Poet Laureat and Historiographer to his late Majesty.’—*Langbaine on Dryden*, 1691. ‘Dryden, considering his stature, his simplicity, and the satisfactory nature of everything he wrote, is surprisingly elusive.’—Alan Lubbock, *The Character of John Dryden*, 1925.

WE probably know less about Dryden than about any man of letters since the Restoration who has at all approached him in importance, and what little we do know makes him almost as puzzling to us as he evidently was to *Langbaine*. Much of his life is obscure, and his contemporaries seldom mention him in a way that allows us to form any precise conception of his personality.<sup>2</sup> This was not due to the obscurity of his family and still less, of course, to any failure to obtain immediate and continuous recognition, for his social position was of service to him from the beginning and he became poet laureate within nine years of the publication of his first serious poem.

The Dridens were an old Cumberland family whose home was at Stafffield, near Kirkoswald.<sup>3</sup> They moved to North-

<sup>1</sup> This survey is based on a full bibliography of Dryden which I am preparing for the Clarendon Press. Many of the pieces are, of course, well known, and extracts from them will be found in the Scott-Saintsbury edition of Dryden's *Works*. I think a few have not been noticed before. I have made no reference to the Collier controversy as it has been discussed so often.

<sup>2</sup> Saintsbury quotes a passage from *Poeta de Tristitus* (1682) as a description of Dryden's conversation, and Professor A. Nicoll in his *Dryden and His Poetry* quotes another from *Rochester's Ghost* as a description of his appearance. Neither has anything to do with Dryden. The first refers to Shadwell and the second to Sheffield.

<sup>3</sup> Malone gives the family home as Staff'hill, on the authority of a genealogical tree in a Harleian MS. Dr. Allen Mawr tells me this is without doubt Stafffield near Kirkoswald. Mr. Denwood of

amptonshire, where they still live in the country mansion of Canons Ashby, and where they had by the poet's time left sufficient mark in small ways for us to be able to gather from the county history and such sources some notion of his ancestors and relations on both sides. It is characteristic of his own history that the date of his birth as well as its exact place had, until recently,<sup>1</sup> to be accepted only on tradition. He was certainly at Cambridge from the middle of 1650 until April 1655, but there follow three mysterious years about which we are in the dark. From a document quoted by E. Legouis in his *André Marvell* giving the quantity of mourning allowed to Milton, Marvell, and Dryden on the death of Cromwell, it is clear that he did hold some post under Thurloe, as has been conjectured from the statements of his enemies, though as the grant of nine yards, cut down to six in the case of the two elder poets, was disallowed altogether in his, it is probable that his employment had not been for very long or of a very important nature.

From the eve of the Restoration till his death in May 1700 he wrote without cessation. A rough estimate brings the number of lines in his poems to over 20,000, excluding the enormous *Virgil*, the *Juvenal* and *Persius*, and the shorter translations contributed to Tonson's *Ovid* and the *Miscellanies*. He wrote twenty-six plays with their prologues and epilogues, many with dedications and long critical prefaces and all but four without a collaborator, and he supplied at the current market rate 40 or so prologues and epilogues to the plays of others and for special occasions. The amount of his original prose and prose translations is in any case large, and it seems likely that there were contributions, still unidentified, to official pamphlets, which he would have

Cockermouth says that it has been traditional in his family for 200 years that the Dridens lived close to Huthwaite Hall near Isel. Of their home only an outbuilding remains. The family may have moved, or there may have been more than one branch.

<sup>1</sup> Professor R. G. Ham called attention to the date on Dryden's Horoscope in the Ashmolean, where it is given as the 19th of August 1631: the Horoscope itself was cast for the 9th: the date was apparently the 9th of August O.S., the 19th of August N.S.

made as Historiographer Royal. It is not easy to be sure how far he was really the editor of the miscellanies called indifferently by his or Tonson's name, but besides what can be gathered from stray sentences in his correspondence with the publisher and in the prefaces to *Sylvæ* and *Examen Poeticum* it is plain from a letter written by Stepney to Leibnitz in 1693 that he sometimes took a direct hand in the selection of the contributors to Tonson's undertakings. An examination of the early editions of *Absalom and Achitophel* fully supports the testimony of Dr. Johnson's father that its sale was very large, and the author, anonymous but at once identified, whose sympathies had been made clear in the dedications of two plays published during the confusion of the Popish Plot, must have seemed to the public almost as important a person in politics as he had hitherto been in the theatre.

The three editions of *The Hind and the Panther* coming quickly on top of one another show that this controversial tract must also have been bought up eagerly, although its arguments could not have been congenial to many of its readers. His marriage with the daughter of an earl, even if, as his enemies constantly alleged, her conduct had not always been correct, had early widened his social connexions: he had mixed with the Fellows of the Royal Society, of which he was for a time a member: he was intimate with many prominent noblemen, especially those of a literary turn, and throughout his life he found no difficulty in being on cordial terms with young writers of promise as they came along. He complains of illness in the preface to *The Hind and the Panther*. For this reason Southerne had to finish *Cleomenes* for him, and in fact during the last part of his life he had periods of ill health; but the retention of his faculties and even their increase in his old age suggests that he had generally enjoyed a corresponding bodily vigour, and he doubtless went about a good deal and was seen at other places than Wills's coffee-house and the theatre, from which his absence at one period was observed by an irate actor. Local traditions or anecdotes associating him with places as far apart as Croxall and Ramsbury show

that he was something of a traveller, apart from his periodical visits to his relations in Northamptonshire. There are many complimentary prologues to the University of Oxford besides Dryden's, and it is difficult to draw from such a master of flattery any very precise meaning when he is writing in this vein, but he possibly did have a hankering after an academic life. Obviously no evidence can be drawn from Tom Brown's burlesque account of his conversation in London about life in college, but the announcement, incorrect as it was, that he had been appointed President of Magdalen,<sup>1</sup> where indeed his son John was illegally foisted into a fellowship for a short time by James II, and other slight indications make one think that he may have had acquaintance with the life of the University he professed to prefer to his own. But this, like so much else about him, is conjecture.

We know almost to a day when many of his writings appeared. We know a few dates in his life, including that of his receiving the degree of M.A. from the Archbishop of Canterbury—something of an oddity in itself: we have the brief newspaper accounts of the assault on him in Rose Alley;<sup>2</sup> there are a good many anecdotes of uncertain authority about him and there are, of course, numerous well-known passages of self-revelation scattered throughout his prose writings. A few letters have been added to the forty-five printed by Malone, but those to Dorset which Saintsbury was not allowed to inspect now seem to have disappeared altogether. Evelyn baldly notes a visit Dryden paid him at Sayes Court. Pepys, who had known him at Cambridge and who frequently went to his early plays, mentions him only once during the period of the diary, though he evidently knew him well later on. A freshly elected Warden of All Souls insulted him at a coffee-house. But there are not many records of people meeting him.<sup>3</sup> Of the younger men who had regard

<sup>1</sup> There were also rumours at one time that he was to be Warden of All Souls and at another President of Trinity College, Dublin.

<sup>2</sup> An occasional fact still comes to light: for instance, that he lived for a time with Sir Robert Howard in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

<sup>3</sup> He is mentioned under the year 1678 in Hooke's recently published *Diary*.

for him few except Congreve,<sup>1</sup> who left it till rather late, attempted to leave any memory of him that was not expressed in vague verse or casual remarks. Many, no doubt, would have found it difficult to do so had they tried, for his curious inconsistency, which made him at times so much suspected, must have sprung from a personality difficult for even those who knew him well to grasp in a communicable form.

There are a few other sources of information about him, but at best our knowledge is meagre of a man who touched contemporary life at so many points and for so long, though perhaps it would appear more substantial if it were not for a mass of hostile books and pamphlets which seem sometimes to give us a glimpse of him and at others serve only to confuse what little we do know on firmer foundations. Throughout his life he was the target for attacks from every quarter, and in the attempt to reconstruct his history these have of necessity been used by biographers. Their mere existence is probably not without significance in the estimate of his elusive character. Most of these pamphlets were used by Malone and Scott, but as they did not know of them all the curious collection may be worth assembling once more. In the case of one of his most famous quarrels, that with Blackmore, the real cause of his anger, a point not without some importance, escaped them both. A complete survey of all contemporary criticism of him, honest or malicious, could probably not now be made. He more than once refers to attacks of which no trace remains, and it is not always possible to be sure if he is speaking of verbal strictures delivered in assemblies of critics or conveyed to him in conversation or of printed attacks which have disappeared. That a good deal of writing of this sort has perished altogether is probable. There are manuscripts containing libels which may be transcripts of printed sheets which cannot now be found, and some pieces such as *The Tory Poets* have so nearly been lost altogether that it is probable that others existed which, notwithstanding the diligence of such men as Luttrell

<sup>1</sup> Lord Lansdowne's short account of Dryden supports the famous 'character' left by Congreve.

and Wood, never got into the collections where their survival would have been assured.

The first of Dryden's plays to be acted required the patronage of Lady Castlemaine before it was well received, and we know from the preface to *Secret Love*, published in 1668, that this play had also been severely criticized: but it is not, so far as I know, till late in 1668, after Dryden had himself introduced the foibles of his brother-in-law into a literary quarrel, that the long series of attacks on his own character began. The general discussion as to the use of rhyme on the stage had become crystallized into a dispute between himself and Sir Robert Howard, and in this famous controversy there was one pamphlet which would be quite insignificant were it not for the fact that it may have served as the model and source for many of those that followed. *A Letter from a Gentleman to the Honourable Ed. Howard; . . . occasioned By a Civiliz'd Epistle of Mr. Dryden's before his second Edition of the Indian Emperour* was read aloud one day in September 1668 after church by his boy to Pepys, who found it, as indeed it is, 'mighty silly'. This pamphlet is signed R. F., and Peter Cunningham suggested that the initials stand for Richard Flecknoe. There is no real evidence for this, and two years later Flecknoe wrote an adulatory epigram on Dryden.<sup>1</sup> Dryden did, however, pursue Flecknoe with something more than the general contempt with which, in the fashion of the time, he always speaks of such cockshies of Restoration criticism as Withers and Quarles; and in 1680 he had become in Dryden's mind the poet 'of scandalous memory'.<sup>2</sup> R. F., whoever he was, attempts to come to the victim's aid against the arguments and sarcasm of *A Defence of the Essay*, perceiving, he professes, that Sir Robert 'could not so well make a Return in a Billingsgate stile'. He accuses Dryden, whom he dubs 'the squire', of

<sup>1</sup> In the second edition of his *Epigrams* (1671) some verses attacking Dryden were added; but this was in consequence of the epilogue to the Second Part of *The Conquest of Granada*.

<sup>2</sup> The sentence in the dedication of *Mr. Limberham*, 1680, in which the remark occurs is, as Malone pointed out, very obscure.



plagiarism; quotes the line from *Astræa Redux* 'An horrid stillness first invades the ear', always a temptation to Dryden's tormentors; talks of the loss the Church had of him when he was diverted from entering Orders; alludes to Dryden's employment under the Government in the 'late times' and to his father having been a 'committee man'. As time went on the character of his wife, his relations with Anne Reeves, and other touches were added, but we have here the essential framework laid for any number of future pamphlets. *The Sullen Lovers* was published in November of the same year with a preface which was the first round in the long contest between Shadwell and Dryden. Shadwell, in his hot-headed way, interpreted Dryden's general critical attitude at this time and a specific sentence in *An Essay of Dramatick Poesy* in particular as an 'insolent' attack on Ben Jonson, and under the designation 'some' accused Dryden of stealing plays and of a 'bawdy and profaneness which they call *brisk writing*'. However, Shadwell later made amends in the preface to *The Humourists*, and though the rumblings of battle went on in their respective prefaces intermittently they seem to have been on reasonably good terms till 1678: they were usually writing for different theatres, and though they had friends like Sedley and patrons like the Duke of Newcastle in common they may not have been thrown much together. Shadwell's convivial habits would hardly have suited Dryden, who, at least till late in life when he was too much in Addison's company—Spence is the authority for this—was sober and regular in his habits. *Tyrannick Love* was acted in the last week of June 1669 and published later in the year with a preface defending the play from charges of profaneness and irreligion and justifying the representation of such a character as Maximin on the stage. The clamour seems to have gone on, and for once Dryden spared the time to give some meaning to the words 'reviewed by the Author' on the title-page, for two years later, in the second edition, he added a paragraph rebuking the 'little critics' who had made fun of the line:

And he who servilely creeps after sense,

and the 'fool' who had charged him 'with nonsense' in *The Indian Emperor*

Another of Dryden's brothers-in-law, 'Dull Ned', to whom *A Letter* had been addressed, was inclined to take opposite views to his on the critical problems of the drama, and he now expounded them in a preface, ineffective but showing some critical capacity, to *The Woman's Conquest* (1671). In the epilogue to another of his plays of the same year, *Six Days Adventure*, he had a dig at *The Conquest of Granada*, which had been acted at the end of 1670. The story of *The Rehearsal*, which there is no reason to doubt was substantially the work of Buckingham, who had a real turn for burlesque, need not be repeated. Its success doubtless prompted a Mr. Arrowsmith, of whom nothing seems to be known except that he is described as an M.A. of Cambridge, to put another piece of banter on Dryden's dramatic methods. *The Reformation* was produced at Dorset Gardens in September 1673, 'the play being', says Downes, 'the Reverse of the Laws of Morality and Virtue it quickly made its Exit to make way for a Moral one'. It contains a scene caricaturing Dryden at work.

I take a subject, as suppose the Siege of *Candy* or the Conquest of *Flanders*, and by the way Sir let it alwayes be some war-like action: you can't imagine what grace a Drum and Trumpet give a Play. Then sir I take you some three or four or half a dozen kings, but most commonly two or three serve my turn not a farthing matter whether they lived within a hundred years of one another . . . But give me leave to mark it for infallible, in all you write reflect upon religion and the clergy . . . I take some half a dozen youngsters of the town, people that pride themselves on one of my nods or a shaking by the hand at the Coffee-house, and let them have a copy of a song or two or promise of a Prologue, which does so much oblige, that I have all the faction of the hour that makes a noise on my side.

Dryden had already attained the position of almost legendary eminence which he was to keep till the end of his life. In the meantime 'Mr. Bayes' of *The Rehearsal* had been dragged into a controversy which in no way concerned the original.

Marvell, in his dispute with Parker, chose to apply this nickname to his antagonist, as later he discomfited the Head of a Cambridge College with whom he was having a theological argument by labelling him 'Mr. Smirke', the chaplain in *The Man of Mode*. In *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* (1672), and in the books and pamphlets which flew about in the controversy, the authors made very free with 'Mr. Bayes' and sometimes with Dryden himself when it suited them.

The origin of the quarrel between Dryden and Ravenscroft is obscure. *The Citizen Turned Gentleman* certainly had a good run at Dorset Gardens. This may have piqued Dryden, or he may have considered some lines in the prologue about fighting Hectors aimed specifically at his heroic plays. At any rate in an epilogue he wrote for a special performance<sup>1</sup> and in the prologue to *The Assignation* he is sarcastic at some gibberish spoken by one of Ravenscroft's characters. When *The Assignation* failed Ravenscroft replied in *The Careless Lovers* (1673), with a prologue of some force, though by the time he wrote the address 'To the Reader' he had become conciliatory. The quarrel fizzled out, but it is worth mentioning as a probable illustration of Dryden's touchiness, little as he seems ever to have cared for dramatic writing himself, at the successful run of a play by another and inferior hand, a trait noted by Tonson, who recorded that he was suspicious of rivals.<sup>2</sup>

In the spring of 1673, about a year after the publication of *The Conquest of Granada*, there appeared four anonymous pamphlets: *The Censure of the Rota*, *The Friendly Vindication of Mr. Dryden from the Censure of the Rota*, *A Description of the Academy of the Athenian Virtuosi*, and *Mr. Dryden Vindicated in a Reply to the Friendly Vindication*. *The Censure*, which was probably by Richard Leigh of Queen's College, Oxford, opens with a description of the Virtuosi met at a

<sup>1</sup> To *The Maiden Queen* 'in mans cloathes'.

<sup>2</sup> In *A Comparison Between the Two Stages*, 1702, after a reference to Dryden's public praise of Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Southern: Sullen adds 'and yet I have seen him bite his Nails for Vexation that they came so near him'.

Coffee Academy to discuss *The Conquest of Granada*; they debate what they consider to be the absurdities and defects of Dryden's plays and poems, illustrating their censures with quotations. The *Elegy* on Oliver, 'one who was as great a contemnor of Kings as *Almanzor*', is raked up. Dryden's supposed appreciation of himself at the expense of Ben Jonson is castigated and some of his less fortunate lines held up to ridicule.

*The Friendly Vindication*, which in point of fact is another attack, supposes Dryden at a meeting with his literary friends: 'The excellent Mr. *Dryden* taking into serious consideration the Affairs of *Wit* and having made an Assignment to that purpose with some flourishing *Ingenuities*; no less conscious than admirers of his Fame': one of the forwardest urged the immediate discussing of the severe Censure of *The Rota of Oxford*: the 'admirers' proceed to discuss some of *The Censure's* criticisms in a way to add to the discomfort of the poet. The failure of *The Assignment* is commented on, and Dryden is accused of bringing real persons upon the stage 'with so little disguise that many beheld themselves acted for their Half-Crown'.

The author of *A Description*, which has been incorrectly treated as another attack, pretends that after he had lightly read over *The Censure*, 'for it deserv'd little consideration', he was taken by a friend to see the Academy of the Virtuosi, 'which was a large room in a Coffeehouse kept for them where thrice a week they met retir'd from Company. . . .'. The friends get to the place before the Virtuosi arrive, and by means of a tip gain admission to a room in which they find a secretary at work. They have time to inspect the contents of the apartment and find the Critics' owls and several of Dryden's books lying about in a mangled condition. The Virtuosi arrive, announced under learned names. At last Cassus, the author of *The Censure*, comes in; and the secretary having supplied the Critics with 'teeth and nails' the business of the day begins. The author vindicates the Heroic Poem at first by quotation from the classics, but finding the critics unable to understand Latin he falls back

upon Cowley and continues through some pages to defend Dryden's position.

*Mr. Dryden Vindicated*, by Charles Blount, answers the specific cavils of *The Friendly Vindication*, and charges the author with being one of the spiteful critics 'who like crabbed-fac'd Maids, wish there were no such things as Beauty and Husbands because they have none'. Dryden rarely took any notice of attacks of the pedantic type of *The Censure* and *The Friendly Vindication*, but in the last paragraph of the dedication of *The Assig nation* he refers to the dispute: 'I have not wanted Friends even amongst Strangers,<sup>1</sup> who have defended me more strongly, than any Contemptible Pedant cou'd attacque me, For the other; he is only *Fungoso* in the Play, who follows the Fashion at a distance, and adores the *Fastidious Brisk* of *Oxford*.'

Minor controversies were rife in the years 1672-3. A curious little book, *Raillerie a la Mode Considered. A Discourse Shewing the open Impertinence and Degenerosity of Publishing Private Pecques and Controversies to the World* (1673), animadverts on them and the character of a detractor. 'One Book beares the Bell away one while, and then presently comes out *Reflections, Observations, Answers, Replications* and *Exceptions* upon it. . . . Our Laureat himself cannot escape Calumny.' The writer enumerates the Marvell versus Parker and *The Rota* tracts and two books which had also been recently published, one of them of a more serious complexion than the frivolous discussion of an imaginary circle of critics.

Most attacks on Dryden before the time of Collier took the form of irrelevant personal abuse or of burlesque, but in *Remarques on the Humours and Conversations of the Town* (1673) a puritanical voice managed to make itself heard, not at that period a very common occurrence. The author of this little

<sup>1</sup> The relations between Charles Blount the Deist and Dryden are of interest. Blount was a Whig and the author of a famous political Whig pamphlet, besides being so unorthodox as to commit suicide because he could not marry his deceased wife's sister. Dryden seems to have been friendly with him till his death in 1693.

book for the most part gives the young country gentleman to whom his *Remarques* are addressed conventional advice to avoid the dangers of town life, but his warnings are freed from banality by a certain adroitness with which he falls on the poets. They are called to task for making extravagant claims for their influence in the world and told that a member of any other profession doing so would quickly find himself held up to ridicule on their own stage. The writer evidently looked on Heroic plays with the apprehension with which educationalists regard a gangster film to-day or as *The Beggar's Opera* was regarded in its own time. This kind of drama leads the inexperienced, he considers, into a world of harmful unreality: its 'Honour' banishes 'Reason and generosity in the contempt of Life'; its 'Love' misguides youth rather than is 'capable of giving a just assistance to the occasions of Life'. Dryden is specifically aimed at; and a controversy on the subject of marriage, which the poetical discipline was supposed to have undermined, arose and was carried on in *Remarks upon Remarques* (1673), where the young gentleman is told not to take any notice of his tutor, and in other small books such as *Conjugium Conjugium Or Some serious Considerations on Marriage* (1673) and *Marriage Asserted* (1674).

The next of Dryden's antagonists to spring up was Settle. After *The Empress of Morocco* had been given at Court, Settle was anxious to have it acted at the Theatre Royal, although he was under an agreement with the Duke's Company. This, as he explains in his *Narrative*, written ten years later when he had decided to part company 'with that troublesome companion Whiggism', could not be effected. It may be that Dryden made no very strenuous effort to retain the play at Drury Lane, or possibly Settle was anxious to revenge Ravenscroft, with whom he was on friendly terms, for Dryden's attack on *Mamamouchi*, or it may simply be that Settle, who was never very level-headed, felt in an access of vanity a desire to chastise a rival. At any rate, *The Empress* was published with some caustic remarks about 'Scriblers in this Age' and their formulae for dedications obviously

directed at Dryden. It is hardly true to say, as has been said, that Settle got the best of it in the squabble that followed, for Dryden on Settle's shortcomings as a writer is at his best in the Postscript to *Notes and Observations on the Empress of Morocco* (1674).

Between 1674 and the beginning of the deluge of pamphlets that followed *Absalom and Achitophel* Dryden received uncomplimentary notice from three of his greatest contemporaries, Marvell, Otway, and Rochester. There is no doubt of Dryden's appreciation of *Paradise Lost*, whatever we may think of *The State of Innocence*, and we may suspect that the drubbing Marvell gave him in his verses before the second edition (1674) was not entirely prompted by literary considerations. Aubrey, it may be remarked, brackets Dryden and Marvell as two of Milton's 'familiar learned acquaintance'. Dryden's relations with Otway are shadowy. They both became strong Tories, but in 1676 Dryden seems again to have shown some signs of jealousy and to have referred to *Don Carlos* in a way its author naturally resented. In the preface to the printed play Otway reports a remark made by Dryden in conversation, 'I gad he knew not a line in it he would be Author of', but contented himself with crying *tu quoque* as regards *The Assignment*. Rochester's *Allusion to Horace*, critical rather than abusive, and *A Trial of the Poets for the Bays*,<sup>1</sup> if he wrote it, were circulated in manuscript somewhat later.

*The Rehearsal* had exhausted the possibilities of burlesquing Heroic plays which were themselves burlesques, but some minor attempts in this form of criticism were made on more promising material. *The Maiden Queen* seems to have early been brought into a performance of *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*; two comic versions of 'Celimina of my heart' from *An Evening's Love* had been printed in *Mock Songs and Joking Poems* (1675), and Duffet had concocted *A Mock Tempest* for representation at the rival theatre.

Among the literary oddities of this time was a book by

<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to accept Mr. Ham's view that this was by Settle. Possibly Buckingham had a hand in it.

one James Carkasse, a King's Scholar who left Westminster two years after Dryden. This eccentric gentleman was very likely in Bethlem, as the title-page of *Lucida Intervals* (1679) intimates, at the time he wrote it. The doctor seems to have dealt with the embarrassing question put to him by the patient as to his fitness for release by telling him he must prove it by abstaining from writing verse, but is met with the answer that many people outside write poetry,

*Bucks* both and *Rochester* unless they mend  
Hither the *King* designs forthwith to send,  
*Shepherd* and *Dreyden* too, must on 'em wait.

*The Kind Keeper* or *Mr. Limberham* was produced at Dorset Gardens on the 11th of March, 1679, but either because it reflected on the private habits of Shaftesbury or Lauderdale, as has been suggested, or because it really did shock the audience, it was allowed a run of only three days. Dryden says he took a 'becoming care' to alter it for the press. An unexpurgated manuscript was seen by Malone. The play is anything but decent and, though a list of still more indelicate pieces has been furnished, it was used for years afterwards as a convenient whip for the author when nothing else was immediately available. John Tutchin in his *Poems on Several Occasions* (1685) was particularly incensed with 'The Bawdy Sot that late wrote *Limberham*'. Soon afterwards, on the 18th of December, 1679, a much more serious business happened, the savage attack on Dryden in Rose Alley. Malone and Scott too readily placed the responsibility for the assault on Rochester. Contemporary rumours seem to point at least as much to the Duchess of Portsmouth, but the facts we have to go on are few, and here, as so often, the personal relations between Dryden and his contemporaries cannot be satisfactorily reconstructed. There are many contemporary allusions to the affair in prologues and elsewhere, but they show little sympathy with the sufferer.

Soon after Tonson's edition of *Ovid's Epistles* (1680) with its long preface by Dryden came out, Matthew Stevenson produced a burlesque volume called *The Wits Paraphras'd*, complete with a dedication to Julian, and, one suspects,



consciously modelled on the format, &c., of Tonson's book. A little later Captain Alexander Radcliffe, who specialized in buffoonery and wrote a spirited 'Mr. Dryden's Description of Night' for a volume called *The Ramble* with a sub-title which still helps to sell the book, produced his *Ovid Travestie* (1680).

Malone and Scott have fully discussed most of the pieces published in answer to *Absalom and Achitophel* and *The Medal*. The furious paper war that raged at this time was made possible by the refusal of the first Whig parliament to renew the Press Act originally passed in 1662; and until 1685, in spite of attempts by the Courts to invoke the Common Law to suppress seditious publications, the Whigs were able to write what they chose with reasonable safety. Shaftesbury was supported by an organized press. 'He had', says North, 'a great Judgement and Dexterity in managing and putting forth Libels', but he was unfortunate in his poets, the good ones all being Tories.<sup>1</sup> It was a perpetual joke among the Tories that Shaftesbury had been a candidate for the throne of Poland in 1675, and in *A Modest Vindication of the E. of S—y* (1681) Seignioro Roberto Howardensko, Jean Drydenuvtritz, his deputy Tom Shadworiski, and others are allotted to the Whig leader to assist him in the formidable tasks he will have to encounter in his new kingdom, such as the conversion of the 'Great Turk'.

*A Panegyrick on the Author of Absalom and Achitophel Occasioned by his former writing of an Elegy in praise of Oliver Cromwell lately Reprinted* (1681) is short but stiff reading. The author allows Dryden's 'Laurell'd Head' to have a sweet melodious tongue, but attacks him fiercely for change and inconsistency. Hitherto Dryden had been repeatedly taunted with his poem on Cromwell; now some one thought of reprinting it; and the verses reappeared on a single sheet headed *An Elegy on the Usurper O. C. . .* (1681), with some lines added at the end, beginning

The Printing of these Rhimes Afflicts me more  
Than all the Drubs I in Rose-Alley bore.

<sup>1</sup> In *A Character of the True Blue Protestant Poet* (1682) it is alleged that Settle sold his services to the party that made the higher bid.

The poem was again reprinted with Waller and Sprat's poems but, I suppose, by a less malignant enemy, as except for the substitution of 'Usurper' for the 'Lord Protector' of the original title the reprint is not, on its face, obviously offensive. The author of *The Life of Boetius Recommended to the Author of the Life of Julian* (1683) is eloquent on the absurdity of raking up this poem in the face of Dryden's long years of loyalty. 'I cannot pass by Mr. Dryden's case. . . . No sooner then had he publish'd his *happy Thoughts* [*Absalom* and *The Medal*] but the *Hornets* were presently about him too: and, to give him (as they thought) his *mortal wound*, they printed his *Elegy* upon *Cromwel* with great clamour and joy.' However, this trick seemed to be considered suitable for every occasion, and out the poem came again in 1687, after the publication of *The Hind and the Panther*. Four years later it was reprinted by Tonson himself, to make up sets of the poet's collected works.

*Poetical Reflections on a late Poem Entitled Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) almost defies repeated attempts to read it, and one can easily agree with the remark in a contemporary news-sheet that it was of more use to the piemakers than to any one else. Malone was certainly doing Buckingham an injustice in accepting him as the author. Thorn-Drury thought it likely to have been by Ned Howard, but for this he had only the evidence of a manuscript note on the title-page of his own copy. The prose address emphasizes the point, which would have been a strong one at any other period in English history, that the author makes a principal character on his own side, i.e. the King, 'a broad figure of scandalous inclination'. This not unreasonable charge and that of the unfairness of producing it just before the man at whom it was aimed was on trial for his life were the most substantial retorts to *Absalom*.

*A Whip For A Fools Back who styles Honourable Marriage a Curs'd Confinement* [1682], attributed to Christopher Nesse, a serious writer who managed to get himself excommunicated four times, accuses 'dirty Jack' with wearisome reiteration of advocating polygamy. It was followed by *A Key* (*With the*

*Whip*) (1682) which is of more interest, as it provides the first identification of the characters in *Absalom*, obvious as most of them were, while attempting to show the unsuitability of the biblical names chosen for them. It also accuses Dryden of softening his character of Shaftesbury for a bribe. Malone dealt at length with the nature of the supposed bribe. As a matter of fact there is some bibliographical evidence to support the supposition, which seems likely enough if the entire passage on Shaftesbury is carefully read, that the celebrated twelve extra lines printed in the second edition were in the original draft of the first but *omitted* when the poem was in the press. The accusation of a bribe seems to have stung Dryden, for he paid particular attention to the *Whip and Key* in his *Epistle to the Whigs*. In the *Litanies* and other political ballads so common at this time Dryden's name pops up now and again. *The Saint turn'd Courtezan* [1681], a satyr on Benjamin Harris, has the expression 'A Dryden's Salutation'. In *Azaria and Hushai* (1682), probably by Pordage,<sup>1</sup> Lady Elizabeth Dryden is said to have been 'a teeming matron, ere she was a wife'. The verse throughout is very tame and the author adopts the absurd expedient, 'the utmost refuge of notorious Block heads reduc'd to the last extremity of sense', as Dryden called it, of using phraseology lifted direct from the poem he was answering:

The *Jews*, a moody, murmuring, stubborn Race,

*The Medal* was published on the 16th of March, 1682, and was immediately answered, if the expression can be used for so unintelligible a pamphlet, by *The Mushroom: or a Satyr Against Libelling Tories and Prelatical Tantivies* (1682), by Edmund Hickeringill. Hickeringill, the titles of whose books were very much better than the books—*The Black Non-formist* was one of them—must have found his literary pursuits rather expensive, as he was mulct of £2,000 on a *Scandalum Magnatum*, a form of procedure open to aggrieved peers and combining the advantages of an action and a

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Ham contends that this piece and *The Medal Revers'd* were by Settle.

prosecution, for libelling his bishop, and eventually had to publish, at his own expense, a recantation of some of his works including *The Mushroom*. Among more general charges he accused Dryden of writing the preliminary verses to *The Medal*; but though obviously a little cracked he was quick-witted, and retorted to Dryden's sarcastic offer of the loan of feet for his enemies' verses with the first allusion to the line in *The Medal*:

Thou leapst o'er all eternal truths in thy Pindaric way  
which 'has more than should by two'. *The Medal Revers'd By the Author of Azaria and Hushai* (1682) is a rather feeble complaint of the Tories and of religious persecution, but it has embedded in it an unwilling tribute to Dryden's poetical powers.

In the meantime his old enemy Settle had been writing his reply to *Absalom and Achitophel*. In *Heraclitus Ridens*, where a close watch was kept on the doings of the Whig poets, it had been announced in January 1682 that 'Elkanah promises to vindicate Lucifer's first Rebellion for a few guineas. Poor Absalom and Achitophel must e'en hide themselves in the Old Testament again; as I question whether they'll be safe from the Fury of this mighty cacadism.'

*Absalom Senior* is too long, but it is not unreadable:

Doeg, tho' without knowing how or why  
Made still a blund'ring kind of melody:

As in *Azaria and Hushai* a great many lines are given to a Whig historians' account of English history down to the Popish Plot. It contains a curious passage in which it is said that Dryden had aspired to become Provost of Eton.

*The Loyal Medal Vindicated* (1682) is dull and rambling and adds little fresh by way of abuse.

The next piece to appear is probably the best known, as it seems to be the best informed, of all the pieces attacking Dryden at this time. *The Medal of John Bayes* has so far as I know been hitherto attributed to Shadwell<sup>1</sup> on the evidence

<sup>1</sup> *Satyr to his Muse*, *The Tory Poets*, and *A Lenten Prologue*, all dated 1682, have each been attributed to Shadwell on slight or no evidence.

of the copy in the Dyce Collection marked by Luttrell 'By Thomas Shadwell. Agts Mr. Dryden very severe 15 May'. Until Thorn-Drury suggested that *MacFlecknoe* had been written as early as 1678—a date now I think established by Mr. H. Brooks's confirmation that the transcript of the poem in the Bodleian, dated that year, is in the handwriting of Oldham, who must have known the facts—*The Medal of John Bayes* was regarded as the cause of Dryden's scare-crowding of Shadwell. Although *MacFlecknoe* was not published till after *The Medal of John Bayes* (Luttrell's copy, now at Yale, being dated the 4th of October), it had been in circulation in manuscript for some time, and it was undoubtedly from some unauthorized source that the first edition was printed. So it is possible to reverse the old story and regard Shadwell's poem as an answer to Dryden's, though there is no reason for connecting them in this way. There is in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, a copy of *The Medal of John Bayes* to which, I believe, attention has not been called, with the following note in manuscript on the title-page in a contemporary hand: 'Shadwell is run mad.'

Notwithstanding this confirmatory piece of evidence it is not certain that Shadwell did in fact write it. Dryden, who seems to have had no difficulty in discovering who his libellers were when he wanted to, neither in *The Vindication of the Duke of Guise* nor anywhere else hints that Shadwell was the author, and it is difficult to reconcile his responsibility for it with the tone of his dedication to Sedley of *The Tenth Satyr of Juvenal* (1687). However, if Shadwell was the culprit the attention he gets in *The Second Part of Absalom and Achitophel*, where his personal defects are more strongly emphasized than in *MacFlecknoe*, and the reference to him as the 'dull fat fool' in one of Dryden's prologues at this time, would be accounted for. Whoever the author was he seems to have been familiar with Dryden, and in the *Epistle to the Tories* at the beginning and in the rough verse which follows an uncouth and grotesque 'portraiture', as he calls it, of some sort is built up. The piece gives more incidents real or imaginary in Dryden's life than any other,

and is tantalizing, as some of them can be neither wholly accepted nor rejected.

*Satyr to his Muse* was attributed to Lord Somers in Curll's edition of *The Works of Rochester*, . . ., 1707, from which unreliable source Jacob probably took his information. Seventeen years after the piece had been published Dryden told Mrs. Steward that the Lord Chancellor was his enemy, but to connect this with *Satyr to his Muse* is far-fetched; and Pope stated that the Lord Chancellor was wholly ignorant of it. One edition professes to be 'Printed for D. Green', the mysterious and possibly pseudonymous publisher of *MacFlecknoe*. The two pieces have strong typographical resemblances and were undoubtedly the work of the same printer. Nothing else by 'D. Green' is known; and the gentleman with 'a curious Collection of Poetry' who announced at the end of *MacFlecknoe* that he intended to oblige the world with a poem every Wednesday morning seems to have abandoned the design, if the gentleman or the poems ever existed. Only the first part of the poem has anything to do with Dryden. It adds, in the most offensive language, a few more of the strange incidents of which the poet's life, according to his enemies, was composed. *The Tory Poets*, published before the 4th of September, is chiefly directed at Dryden and Otway. The anonymous author reflects severely on the licentiousness of the former's prologues, plays, and private morals, his ingratitude to the Duke of Monmouth, and so on. The stage was now much occupied with political plays:

'Tis now no Jest to hear young Girls talk Bawdy,

as *A Lenten Prologue*, published early in 1683, complains. This piece has a few uncomplimentary lines directed at the Laureate. *Directions to Fame About an Elegy on the Late Deceased Thomas Thynn Esqre, And An Elegy on other most Famous English Worthies By an Unknown Author* (1682) is very rare and little known. The Bodleian has recently acquired a copy, and I know of only one other, which is now in America. Line after line of weak and rambling verse is

devoted to Dryden, but it is not easy to get a clear impression of what the author is after. His mistress, Ann Reeves, is mentioned, as is usual in the pieces of this time, and a vague accusation that he will write anything for cash is made against him:

What matter is't how little Truth he writ,  
So that there be the Varnish of some wit?  
And yellow Boys have soundly paid for it.

L'Estrange was an almost greater source of annoyance to the Whigs than Dryden, and another very rare pamphlet published this year, *A Sermon Prepared to be Preach'd at the Interment of the Renowned Observer with an Epitaph by the Rose-Ally Poet*, was put out by some wag nearly a quarter of a century too early.<sup>1</sup> *Religio Laici* was published on the 20th November 1682 and, though more editions were wanted than Malone supposed, there was little in the poem to call forth abuse or praise. It was occasionally cited later on as one more example of Dryden's inconsistency, but it did not come in for much notice till it was thrown into relief by *The Hind and the Panther*. Dryden and Lee's play, *The Duke of Guise*, was produced after some trouble with the Lord Chamberlain at the end of November 1683. Shadwell soon came out with *Some Reflections upon the Pretended Parallel in the Play called the Duke of Guise* (1683). The 'old Serpent Bays' is accused of perverting the good intentions of Lee, from whom it is said he would have filched the credit of the play, if there had been any, as he had done 'in Discourse with all his own friends' when they had collaborated in *Ædipus*. The larger political issue was at this time somewhat narrowed to the fight over the charter of the City of London which the Court considered such a stronghold of Whiggism should only possess in a much modified form, and Thomas Hunt in *A Defence of the Charter* (1683) attacked the play with vigour, complaining that 'they have already condemned the Charter and City and have executed the Magistrates in Effigie upon the Stage'. Another pamphlet, now very difficult to find, *The True History of the Duke of Guise Extracted out*

<sup>1</sup> L'Estrange died in 1704.

of *Thuanus* . . . Published for the undeceiving such as may perhaps be imposed upon by Mr. Dryden's late Tragedy. . . (1683) is more or less explained by its title, and *Sol in Opposition to Saturn*, a single-sheet piece, is too slight to be regarded. Dryden had no time to write for the play a preface which he intended as a reply to Shadwell and Hunt, as the publisher was pressing for copy, but a little later he published *The Vindication of the Duke of Guise* (1683), in which he falls on the spluttering triumvirate, Settle having also lent a hand.

*The Songs of Moses and Deborah Paraphras'd with Poems on Several Occasions* (1685), by C. Cleeve, contains a preliminary poem describing the bookstalls in St. Paul's:

For see where *Denham*, *Dryden*, *Oldham* lye:  
 Few read the title Page, and fewer buy,  
 When to the Book Retailing Coxcomb's price,  
 Perhaps the cautious Buyer will not rise,  
 Come, Sir, says he, to fetch him to his Gin,  
 See I'll be kind, here take *The Medal* in,  
 Audacious Sot to use a Poet so,  
 Thus Chandlers with their Penny Chapmen do,  
 Into the Bargain Thread and Paper throw.

Dryden now had an encounter with Stillingfleet, possibly in his capacity of Historiographer Royal. Soon after his accession two papers reputed to be by Charles II, defending the Catholic religion, were shown in manuscript by James to Pepys, who was probing him as to what his brother's religion had really been. These papers, together with another by Anne Hyde giving her reasons for becoming a Catholic, were published by Royal Command. Stillingfleet wrote an answer, to which Dryden in part replied by contributing a defence of the Duchess's paper to a longer pamphlet printed by the King's printer. Stillingfleet then published *A Vindication of the Answer* (1687), where Dryden is roughly handled. 'Romantick Heroes must be allowed to make Armies of a field of Thistles, and to encounter Wind-mills for Giants.' Stillingfleet accuses him of attempting to divide the clergy of the Church of England.

Professor Bredvold has shown that there is no ground for



supposing that Dryden benefited financially by becoming a Catholic, but when *The Hind and the Panther* was published it was naturally greeted with a series of pamphlets attacking the author or ridiculing the poem. *The Hind and the Panther Transvers'd* 1687 was the first and is the most readable. It seems really to have been the joint work of Montague and Prior, the latter of whom was probably also the author, though he denied it, of two pieces, *A Satyr upon the Poets* and *A Satyr on Modern Translators*, in both of which Dryden is treated without much respect. *The Revolter, A Tragedy-Comedy Acted between the Hind and the Panther and Religio Laici* (1687) returned to the old story that Dryden was not able to enter the Church, for which reason, it was said, he was taking his revenge on her. His 'rambling conscience' was exhibited by contradictory passages from his poems, with a prose commentary to show the inconsistency between 'Mr. D. the Romanist' and 'Mr. D. the Protestant'. *The New Atlantis A Poem . . . with some Reflections upon the Hind and the Panther* (1687) was published anonymously. Thomas Heyrick, the author, explains in the Advertisement prefixed to the old sheets when they reappeared with a new title, *A True Character of Popery and Jesuitism* (1690), that he had been, at the time, too much frightened of the Catholics, 'whose usual answers are not pens', to acknowledge it. Probably his fears were quite unnecessary, as the poem is a long and tedious allegory not likely to leave in the reader sufficient energy to commit an assault. However Heyrick, a grandson of an elder brother of Robert Herrick, was something of a poet—he wrote some curious and attractive poems on the Mole and other creatures in a book of verse published at Cambridge in 1691—and *The New Atlantis* is more like poetry than most of the verse launched at Dryden. The Catholics, finding their faith in disrepute, decide that it can best be supported by poetry. They interview Bavius (Dryden)—

A Proselite, whose servile Pen can write  
For fear, reward, for mischief or for spite.

They prime him on the points to be made—interrupted for

a time by the appearance of a monster—a Trimmer—and eventually,

Thoughtful and dull, according to his use,

Bavius undertakes the task, which will suit him very well, for he hates the clergy, has been hit in marriage, &c. At this time an attack on Dryden, in manuscript, the work of an old enemy, was resuscitated. Martin Clifford, a forbidding-looking person if the portrait of him in Cowley's *Works* (1707) is a good likeness, has been credited in several contemporary pamphlets, &c., with a hand in *The Rehearsal*. Spratt, in dedicating his *Cowley* to Clifford, refers to the latter's disinclination to appearing in print, and when he died he had left four stupid unpublished letters of abuse of *The Conquest of Granada*. It is characteristic of the slapdash methods of many of Dryden's detractors that these letters, which had nothing to do with the present controversy, were printed as a make-weight before *Some Reflections upon the Hind and the Panther* (1687), by Tom Brown, who was just getting into his stride of the serio-comic employment of baiting Dryden. A folio pamphlet, *The Laureat: Jack Squabbs History in a little drawn Down to his Evening from his early Dawn*, by Robert Gould, was published at this time. It is very abusive, though on Dryden's death Gould wrote a poem beginning 'Farewel! thou Chiefest of the Sons of Fame!'

A poem called *The Laurel*, still sometimes confused with *The Laureat*, had been published in quarto in 1685, and is one of the few pamphlets in praise of Dryden. A rare anonymous piece, *The Hind in the Toil* (1688), has little to do with Dryden beyond borrowing the names of some of his beasts. It contains a neat allusion to the late times:

Plots upon plots were then found out to vail  
The grand design, and bury Oats in Meal.<sup>1</sup>

It was to be expected that several people should come to the rescue of the Established Church. Mrs. James, somewhat unchivalrously noticed in the preface to *The Hind and the*

<sup>1</sup> The Meal Tub Plot.

*Panther*, but whose fine portrait at Sion College is testimony to her capacity, had already written a prose *Vindication of the Church of England*, but this had not been provoked by Dryden. *A Poem in Defence of the Church of England in Opposition to the Hind and the Panther* (1688) keeps on the whole to a theological plane, but the accusation that Dryden was unable to take orders is repeated, and

Friend Bayes, I fear this Fable, and these Rimes,  
Were thy dull Pennance, for some former Crimes,  
When thy free Muse her own brisk Language spoke,  
And unbaptiz'd, disdain'd the Christian Yoke.

The death of Buckingham in 1687 was not made the subject of much lamentation, but there is one poem, *To the Memory of the Illustrious Prince George Duke of Buckingham* (1687), which harks back to *Absalom and Achitophel* and 'the embitter'd Song' which had accused him of 'roving Change and wand'ring Fires'. Another very rare pamphlet, *Religio Laici, or a Laymans Faith Touching the Supream Head and Infallible Guide of the Church*, not to be confused with Charles Blount's *Religio Laici* published five years earlier, was printed in 1688. Now that another matter altogether was in dispute Dryden's powers as a satirist, which had been preposterously derided earlier, were admitted. The author of this quarto tract says that Dryden 'has a most powerful and luxurious hand at satyr', adding that there is no one to compare with him unless it be that unknown (but supposed) worthy Author, that writ to him upon his (at last) turning Roman Catholic:

Thou Mercenary Renegade, thou Slave,  
Thou ever changing, still to be a knave,

and thirty-two lines more in the same strain. There is at Welbeck a manuscript copy of this poem headed 'Mr. Bayes supposed by the E. of Middlesex', a disconcerting ascription, for according to more likely tradition Dorset was helping Dryden with money at this very time. Towards the end of 1686 Burnet had published his *Reflections on M. Varillas History . . . and more particularly on his Ninth Book*. Varillas had replied, and in *A Defence of the Reflections*, which appeared

four or five months after *The Hind and the Panther*, Burnet took the opportunity to retort to the character of himself as the Buzzard. If Burnet had not already given Dryden provocation he certainly received it, for the character was extremely libellous of a prospective bishop. Burnet's retort is very vague, and one can only suppose he found a difficulty in thinking of anything sufficiently caustic to say when he wrote, 'it is scarce possible for him to grow worse than he was', improved in the *History* into the statement that 'he was a monster of unmodesty and impiety of all sorts'. It may be observed that Thomas Burnet's explanation that his father was referring to Dryden's plays and not to his personal character cannot be accepted in the face of both passages.<sup>1</sup>

Dryden had himself been at work on a translation of Varillas at the time, as we know from an entry in the *S.R.* on the 29th of April 1687, where the work is described as licensed; but the translation was not published, and Burnet had the satisfaction of assuming that this was because he had been able to discredit the historian. *The Reasons of Mr. Bayes Changing his Religion* (1688), by Tom Brown, and its continuation are amusing, and Brown, working on the traditional Mr. Bayes, succeeded in leaving a comic portrait of Dryden as a pendant to the lurid John Bayes of 1682.

Langbaine's taste for hunting plagiarisms was given ample scope in Dryden's plays, but his hostility may have had a more personal origin than his desire to catch poets cribbing. *A New Catalogue of English Plays with divers Remarks of the Originals of most Plays and the Plagiaries of Several Authors by Gerard Langbaine, Gent. . . .* (1688) had appeared a little earlier as *Momus Triumphans or the Plagiaries of the English Stage Expos'd by Gerard Langbaine Esq.* In an *Advertisement to A New Catalogue* Langbaine says that its getting into the

<sup>1</sup> Percy, in his annotated Langbaine, records a story about Dryden's morals, which he seems to consider supported Burnet's statement, but as the information was double hearsay and its originator 'an old man who in his younger years had been a drawer at a tavern which Dryden frequented', it is extremely unreliable evidence, to say the least of it.

world under the 'Heathenish' Name of *Momus Triumphans* and with the title of Esquire, to which he disclaimed all pretension, added to his name was none of his affair. He attributed the title-page to the machination of other people whom neither he nor his bookseller could identify. It is difficult to know if one can believe this fantastic story. It is possible that Langbaine had been a little ashamed of the first title-page and invented the excuse. At any rate, after *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets* (1691), the familiar 'Langbaine', had been published, somebody in *The Moderator* for the 23rd of June 1692 told him bluntly that being conscious of his 'porterly language' to Mr. Dryden he had pitched on him as the person responsible for the original imposition, and so had run full tilt at him in the present edition. *An Epistle to Mr. Dryden*, some copies of which are dated Exeter Nov. 5, 1688, and beginning 'Dryden thy Wit has catter-wauld too long', need not detain us. A more interesting piece entitled *The Protestant Satire: or Some Reason not all Rhyme In Return to Mr. Bayes's Popish Libels* must have been written about this time, though not published apparently till 1747, when it was inserted in a very rare volume known as Cross's *Miscellany* which contains a witty reply to *The Lady of the May*.

Dryden lost his posts at the Revolution, and though now under the urgent necessity of earning money did not publish anything immediately. There being nothing positive to find fault with his enemies invented a new line of attack, the foisting of bogus pieces on him. *The Address of John Dryden Laureat to His Highness the Prince of Orange* (1689) was a well-printed folio of four leaves with the imprint of Randal Taylor. It presumably took in many people at the time, and the complete absence of anything to arouse suspicion in its appearance has led to its being included among Dryden's own writings in the catalogue of one well-known modern library. Another piece, a bogus *Poem to King William* with an apology for the poet's life, seems only to have been circulated in manuscript until the poem was printed in *Poems on Affairs of State* (1698). Annoyance was, of course, expressed that

he was now on the wrong side. In *The Murmurers* (1689) he appears as *Balaam*:

Thy Songs so sweet, thy Numbers so divine,  
Scarce *Moses* Song had won more Fame than thine:  
But now thy Glory sleeps in Shades profound,  
By Fate and gloomy Death encompass'd round.

Dryden had been accused of serious vices in some of the earlier pamphlets. His snuff-taking and Mr. Bayes's custom of dieting, letting blood, and taking physick before writing served now and then as a comic relief from the days of *The Rehearsal*. A very minor dramatist, Carlisle, introduced them into the prologue, printed by Malone, to *The Fortune Hunters*.

His name was again dragged into a matter with which he had nothing to do. In August 1690 William Sherlock, the nonjuror, suddenly took the oaths under the influence, it was said, of Mrs. Sherlock, who preferred keeping her carriage to going about on foot. Soon a number of pamphlets, in verse and prose, were published, *The Weesils*, *The Anti-Weesils*, *Advice to a Parson*, and so on, in which there is usually some echo of *Absalom and Achitophel* or *The Hind and the Panther*, the author of *The Tribe of Issachar* being particularly free in his use of Dryden's lines. One piece, *Rabshahah Vapulans* (1691), an answer to *The Tribe of Levi*, thought by Wood to be by Dryden himself but really by Tutchin, attacked him very savagely because priests were made fun of on the stage:

This *Art* was at the first found out by Bays;  
The rarest Rules in all his wise *Essays*:  
He led the *Dance*. Nor was't in him so strange,  
Inspir'd by Interest, Madness and Revenge,  
Possess'd with Pride, and hurry'd by Despair,  
At his approach *whipt* from the *House of Prayer*.

On Dryden's exit from the political world and the settlement of the nation's affairs some compassion for him probably became general, and the references to him tend to become less offensive. *A Search after Wit or a Visitation of the Authors In Answer to the late Search after Claret* (1691), in eighty-nine stanzas, runs over the play-writers and critics. To the lines

on Shadwell 'equally admired for his Shape and his Wit' these are added:

And was it for him, that old *De Jure* Bays  
With his Horns (*sic*) and his *Panthers* was turn'd out to graze!  
He had better have staid, and both writ at a Time,  
That one might find *Wit*, and t'other find *Rhyme*.

In *Poems in Burlesque with a Dedication in Burlesque* (1692) there is an account of a visit to the famous coffee-house:

To *Wills* I went, where Beau and Wit  
In mutual Contemplation sit; . . .  
To make amends there I saw *Dryden*  
Whom Pegasus takes so much Pride in,  
He suffers few beside to ride him:  
Sometimes at once he gets a Pack  
Of young raw Rhymers on his Back.

Hitherto his alleged unreadiness in conversation had been treated as mere awkwardness, but in *The Humours and Conversations of the Town exposed in two Dialogues* (1693) a much more friendly view is taken: 'the company of the Author of *Absalom and Achitophel* is more valuable, tho' not so talkative as that of the Modern Men of Banter'. Even his references to marriage, always till now a subject for derision, are sometimes referred to without a gibe. In *A humble Remonstrance of Batchelors in and about London* (1693) it is said: 'we are assured from all hands, that those persons who have taken the greatest pains to expose that Holy State were all of 'em married (to prove which we could name a famous Abdicating Poet, if we were minded).'

Enemies could, however, still be fierce at times, and some verses in *The Loyal and Impartial Satyrist* (1694) attack the Catholic poet by the familiar method of quoting from him.

If Dryden had been constantly rebuked and attacked when he wrote he did not always escape when he was silent. In *The Deliverance, A Poem to the Prince of Orange* (1689) the author complained that it was left to his 'Junior Pen' to caress the Prince while all the great Wits were silent. The poets had not shown much enthusiasm over the coming of William, but they indulged unlimited grief on the death of

Mary. Dryden seems to have felt under an obligation to keep his political sympathies from obtruding much into his writings in return for being left in peace, but if he could do nothing to help the return of Pan and Fair Syrinx he certainly did nothing to gain the goodwill of their successors. A rumour reached Leibnitz at Dresden, rather to his surprise, that Dryden was at work on a poem on the occasion. This was not so, but there exists an interesting letter from Stepney to Tonson in which Stepney asks the publisher to submit an ode he had written to Dryden, Montague, and Congreve for correction. Stepney was puzzled as to which of three bad lines was the best, and as another was printed in its place some one must have come to the rescue, though whether or not this was Dryden there is nothing to show. Beyond expressing his opinion that an ode by the Duke of Devonshire was the best, he let the Queen's death pass unnoticed. His silence annoyed some irritable poet, who printed at the beginning of *An Ode Occasion'd by the Death of the Queen* (1695) a Letter to Mr. Dryden beginning with the uncompromising sentence 'Though I have little Acquaintance with you, nor desire more'. The author of *Urania's Temple or A Satyr upon the Silent Poets* (1695) is more sympathetic:

Had that, now silent Muse been but so kind  
As to this *Funeral Dirge* her *Numbers* join'd,  
On that great *Theme* what *Wonders* had he told:  
For though the *Bard*, the *Quill* is not grown *old*.

Ned Howard took the opportunity, without much regard to the appropriateness of the occasion, to attach to his *Elegy on the Queen's Death* (1695) one of his rambling excursions into criticism, where he expressed himself as much pleased with the progress the Muses had recently made as exhibited by the poems of Dryden, Congreve, Milton, and Blackmore. It was from the last that Dryden received one of the worst insults—apparently unprovoked—which he received in the course of nearly forty years of abuse. His extreme anger with the knight-physician and the trouncing he gives him in the *Preface to the Fables*, the *Epistle to John Driden*,



and the *Prologue to the Pilgrim* have been regarded as something of a mystery, and the cause assigned either to some general remarks on the immorality of the stage in the preface to *King Arthur* or to some lines in *A Satyr Against Wit* about the stench and fumes that would arise from Dryden when he was melted down—uncomplimentary it is true, but not, I think, the cause of his annoyance. *A Satyr* was published just before *The Fables*; but this was probably not the libel of which Dryden specifically complains. This occurs in *Prince Arthur*. Sakil (Dorset) is distributing alms:

The Poets Nation, did Obsequious wait  
 For the kind Dole, divided at his Gate.  
*Laurus* amidst the meagre Crowd appear'd  
 An old revolted unbelieving Bard,  
 Who throng'd and shov'd, and prest, and would be heard  
 Distinguish'd by his louder craving Tone  
 So well to all the Muses Patrons known,  
 He did the voice of modest Poets drown. }  
*Sakil's* high Roof, the Muses Palace rung  
 With endless Cries, and endless Songs he sung.  
 To bless good *Sakil*, *Laurus* would be first,  
 But *Sakil's* Prince and *Sakil's* God he curst.  
*Sakil* without distinction threw his Bread,  
 Despis'd the Flatt'rer but the Poet fed.<sup>1</sup>

One of the last flings at Dryden came not from a political enemy or critic but from an actor on behalf of the Drury Lane Company, and was not altogether without excuse. In the verses he wrote for his friend George Granville's *Heroick Love* (1698) Dryden, perhaps with something of an elderly man's dislike for the changed atmosphere incident to revivals of plays, had written acrimoniously of the performances at Drury Lane, being as he admitted elsewhere especially irritated by a production of *The Conquest of Granada*. Dryden had begun his poem to Granville by bequeathing him his laurels in language not very dissimilar from that which he had used when giving the same legacy to Congreve. This rather typical piece of inadvertence gave Powell, one of the offended cast, an

<sup>1</sup> Some of the lines are quoted by Macaulay, iii. 25, but their significance seems to have been overlooked.

excellent opening of which he availed himself in the preface to his play *The Fatal Discovery* (1698): 'this great wit, with his treacherous memory, forgets that he had given away his laurels upon record twice before, viz. once to Mr. Congreve and another time to Mr. Southerne. . . . Dost thou set up thy transubstantiation miracle in the donation of thy idol bays that thou hast them fresh, new, and whole, to give them three times over?'

Long as the above list of abusive and critical pamphlets is it does not exhaust the attacks on Dryden. Copies of angry verses aimed at him, especially after the publication of *The Hind and the Panther*, are frequently found in manuscript collections, and several are printed in the numerous volumes of *Poems on Affairs of State*, which were also repositories for several pieces falsely and no doubt maliciously ascribed to him. He seems to have had reason for suspecting Rymer of attempting to injure him for political reasons; and Milbourne, who had earlier professed to be his admirer, wrote an ill-natured and tiresome criticism of the *Virgil*. Mrs. Behn flared up in Protestant indignation and Swift pursued his name with contempt in *The Tale of a Tub* and *The Battle of the Books*.<sup>1</sup> Indeed it is not easy to find any parallel in English literature to so much violence and ridicule directed against one man of letters in his life-time unless Pope is a competitor. It is easy to account for the vituperation heaped upon Pope,<sup>2</sup> but if we know anything of Dryden it is that he was without undue vanity and that he was magnanimous to others, unless perhaps when irritated by the success of some inferior playwright. He seems to have been quite free from the infirmity, so common a cause of quarrels, when the mind doubts its own abilities and at the same time insists on their recognition. Much that he wrote, the Heroic Plays for instance, as he very well knew, was fair game and could not

<sup>1</sup> Both written before, though not published till after, Dryden's death.

<sup>2</sup> Pope, who had been made acquainted with Dryden's amiable qualities by Wycherley, Congreve, and Sir William Trumbul, attributed the libels on Dryden to the violence of party, but as we have seen the attacks began too early to be accounted for solely in this way.

have escaped ridicule; many of the onslaughts were incompetent answers to his political poems and were inevitable; others, and those usually the most violent, were called forth by his acceptance of the Roman Catholic religion. His field, it is true, was wider than that of any other serious English writer, and he was therefore liable to attacks from all directions, but they were so numerous and met so many of his activities that one is tempted to wonder if there was not about him something provocative even in a negative way, some vulnerable streak of which his enemies were half-conscious but which they could not locate. For some of the pieces are almost incomprehensible in their fury, as though the writers did not clearly know what it was that had angered them.<sup>1</sup> Saintsbury suggested his lavish flattery and his somewhat frequent indulgence in complaints as possible factors in arousing enmity, but he had the antagonism of Swift in mind, and Dryden's flattery, though more skilful than that of his contemporaries, occurs in an age when flattery, at least in dedications, was universal. Much of it was absurd, but it cannot have seemed peculiar. He sometimes seems to apologize too much. He was inconsistent, and he must have seemed more inconsistent than he was. These traits and habits were easily liable to be ridiculed, as they certainly often were. But behind them it is possible that there was in his character some shade of ineffectiveness which, when it is combined with the possession of extraordinary powers, is apt to be met by resentment. Perhaps the story of his encounter with the Warden of All Souls is suggestive. It at least strikes one as odd that this Mr. Finch, the son of a nobleman and the recently elected head of a college, should have felt himself at liberty to be quite as rude as he

<sup>1</sup> It may be remarked that either Pope's enemies were more competent or their objective was easier. At least they seem on the whole more coherent. Perhaps they benefited by their predecessors, for Savage in *An Author to Let* (1727) says: 'I have well perused the writings of *Luke Milbourne*, *Shadwell*, *Settle*, *Blackmore*, and many others of that stamp notable for gall writ upon *Dryden*. From those I have extracted curious Hints to assist *Welsted* in his new satire against *Pope*.'

was. Meeting Dryden in a coffee-house he publicly wished him joy of his new religion. 'Sir,' said Dryden, 'you are very much mistaken: my religion is the *old* religion.' 'Nay,' replied the other, 'whatever it be in itself I am sure it is new to you for within three days you had no religion at all.'<sup>1</sup>

Dryden probably lacked the power of repartee for occasions of this kind.<sup>2</sup> Whatever it was that brought down on his head so much abuse he generally bore it with restraint, and with unmatched powers of retaliation in print he was difficult to draw.<sup>3</sup>

In *A Discourse concerning . . . Satire* prefixed to the *Juvenal* he says that he has been the public mark of a multitude of scribblers for many years and explains that he has left their lampoons and libels unanswered as they could do no harm.<sup>4</sup> One of his most persistent tormentors was passed with a remark in a letter to Mrs. Steward: 'I hear Tom Brown is coming out upon me.' When he did trouble to retaliate he probably had full justification, as he certainly had in the case of the pious but trying Blackmore.<sup>5</sup>

HUGH MACDONALD.

<sup>1</sup> The Fleming MSS.

<sup>2</sup> This can be gathered from Congreve—and from Dryden himself.

<sup>3</sup> He perhaps sometimes wrote for a private audience: *MacFlecknoe* was not intended for immediate publication if originally for publication at all; the lines on Tonson narrowly escaped oblivion; and what was the *Satyr* which Atterbury wanted Tonson to send him in 1687? Malone, li. 204.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Johnson says Dryden 'is always angry at some past, or afraid of some future censure'; but he of course refers to literary criticism.

<sup>5</sup> In the preface to the *Lucian*, published eleven years after his death, Dryden falls on Ferrard Spence, an earlier translator, with a severity that Spence's version does not explain. Spence had given Dryden provocation in his preface.

## LANGBAINES' ACCOUNT OF THE ENGLISH DRAMATICK POETS (1691)

FOR the history of English Drama there are four indispensable books: Langbaine's *Dramatick Poets* (1691), the *Biographia Dramatica* (at its best in the 1812 edition by Isaac Reed and Stephen Jones), Genest's *English Stage* (1832), and Ward's *History of English Dramatic Literature* (1899). By common consent these are the foundations of all later studies, and the base of the structure is Langbaine. 'These works are so well known to students of the theatre that they seemed to require no further comment', remarks Professor Allardyce Nicoll in the preface to his *History of Restoration Drama* (1923). To 'students of the theatre', perhaps, but not to the general body of students of literature. We are apt to forget our debts only too easily in literary studies, using what has been provided for us without reflecting where it comes from ultimately. It may be that the neglect of one important aspect of late seventeenth-century literature has entailed the disregard of Langbaine. It has always been well realized that the closing years of the century witnessed considerable liveliness in the field of drama: a few years after the appearance of the *Dramatick Poets* Jeremy Collier published his famous *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, and the storm of controversy broke. It was followed by John Dennis's *Usefulness of the Stage* (1698) and many scores of pamphlets and prologues. But what is not so well known about the closing decade of the seventeenth century is that this dramatic controversy constituted but a part of the many-sided literary activity of the period. The study of English literature was established at this time, and henceforth carried on without serious break throughout the eighteenth century. Langbaine compiled his book in the age of Dryden, Sir William Temple, Anthony Wood, and George Hickes. At Oxford, in Langbaine's own college, The Queen's College, Anglo-Saxon became the acknowledged

study of enterprising young scholars, under the patronage of Edmund Gibson (afterwards Bishop of London) and the stimulus of George Hickes of Lincoln College. All this activity in English studies may be said to be epitomized on its profounder side in Hickes's great treatise on the Northern languages, the *Thesaurus* (1705), and in a lighter mood in such a useful book as the *Dramatick Poets*.

Gerard Langbaine, son of the Provost of The Queen's College, Oxford, and esquire bedel of law in that university, was an Oxford man, first and last. He was born in the parish of St. Peter-in-the-East, spent most of his life either in Oxford or near it, and was eventually laid to rest within the precincts of that noble old church. It was inevitable that his famous book should, in 1691, be issued from an Oxford press—'Printed by L. L. for George West and Henry Clements'—one of the earliest of the important books published there. Throughout his life he revelled in an absorbing hobby, that of collecting as many plays as he could find, and frequenting the theatre as often as time and money would permit. In his book he gives the titles of nearly a thousand plays and short accounts of over two hundred authors. He was an amateur of the drama, enthusiastic and carefree: 'a great jockey', Anthony Wood calls him, and his preface is sufficient proof of his lively disposition. He makes it clear that he wishes to be taken for a Gentleman and not a Player; and there is a pleasing nonchalance about some of his remarks: 'I have not mention'd so many Authors, out of hopes of being counted Industrious, or to beget an Opinion in the World of my Reading . . . having employ'd a great part (if not too much) of my Time in reading Plays and Novels, in several Languages.' He keeps up this attitude to the end of his preface, but when he speaks of 'having mis-spent my Time in these Lighter Studies, I promise for the future, to imploy my Self on Subjects of more Weight and Importance', we are tempted to re-read the whole at once in the light of this remark. Moreover, there is no doubting his final sentence—'and having laid a Foundation, I shall leave it to Others (who may think it worth their while) to perfect the Edifice'. How

literally his compilation was to be adopted as a foundation in the following century he could not have guessed, and those 'Others (who may think it worth their while) to perfect the Edifice' included some of our most eminent students of early drama.

As we follow the history of the vogue of Langbaine's *Account* among the scholars and editors of the eighteenth century, we realize that this book was singled out for very special attention. Why did such competent scholars as Steevens and Malone, who could themselves have compiled a far more reliable guide to earlier English Drama at very short notice, persist in annotating their 'Langbaines', and thus help to create the legend of this very inaccurate compilation? The learned annotations of William Oldys, who really brought the book into favour by using it as a notebook in which to jot down the accumulations of his erudition, will be most people's ready answer. But this answer does not account for everything, for Oldys thus enhanced the value of several other works of reference, such as Winstanley's *Lives of the Most Famous English Poets* (1687); and the devotees of earlier literature did not transcribe his manuscript notes from these books with the infinite care bestowed on his 'Langbaine'. In fact we do wrong to the 'great jockey' if we fail to realize the attractive qualities of his own text. The attraction for the eighteenth century certainly did not lie in his accuracy, for to him his own earliest copy of a play was always a first edition. Thomas Percy realized this defect at once, and in his interleaved copy he puts on record that 'Langbaine's Work would have been more valuable if he had everywhere set down the first Editions and endeavoured to ascertain the time when each play was brought upon the stage. But neither of these he has professedly done; the editions referred to, being such as he happened to have in his possession. This is a perpetual source of confusion to such writers as heedlessly quote him and occasions constant anachronisms in their compilations' (note dated 5 June 1761). Previously Oldys had expressed his opinion much more curtly: 'A woeful Chronologist art thou, Gerard Langbaine'

(p. 254, art. 'John Heywood'). On the other hand Malone is much impressed in his favour, 'because he had actually in his possession almost 1,000 plays and masques', and is ready to accept his descriptions of title-pages and editions, as long as they are not dubbed first, second, third, &c., editions.

Without doubt one of his attractive qualities was his honesty: when he knew practically nothing of an author he said so frankly. Of John Dover, for instance, he writes: 'A Gentleman of whom I can give no other account than what I learn from a Play he has written.' About Thomas Southern he is equally explicit: 'An Author of whom I can give no further Account, than that he has two Plays in print.' Perhaps his most characteristic entries are those of minor playwrights; and such friendly confessions as the following are frequent: 'I cannot tell the Date, or the Place, where 'twas first acted, the Title-page of my Copy being lost' (John Cook's *Greene's Tu Quoque*). With high spirits he was taking part in a diverting literary game, where he could indulge his fancy for reckless guessing and open confessions. His book owes a great deal of its popularity to this atmosphere of literary sport, and the eighteenth-century readers, though disapproving of his carefree methods, could not resist his disarming frankness. But the most alluring bait for them was this display of inaccuracies so temptingly laid out before them: Langbaine simply cried out to be corrected, in matters of bibliography and biography. Quite seriously, often missing the comic humanity of much of the book, they one and all set about tidying it up—Oldys, Percy, Steevens, Malone, Garrick, Haslewood, and many others paid Langbaine the compliment of taking him to task for his mistakes, and that at very great length. Gradually they heaped up a mass of annotations, which then went to enrich important current works of reference, such as the *Biographia Britannica* and the *Biographia Dramatica*. Langbaine's marked prejudices often roused them to retort in the margins and interleaving of their copies, and as we peruse them one after another we follow a lively and sometimes acrimonious debate, in which the latest annotator records his opinion, obviously with little thought



of any one capping this in the future. Langbaine's extremely unjust account of Milton passes without notice in the various copies, but his bias against Dryden is the cause of much interesting controversy. The men of the eighteenth century were divided sharply on the question of Dryden's character. As early as 1692 there were protests at Langbaine's charge against him of wholesale plagiarism;<sup>1</sup> and a century later Walter Scott in his edition of Dryden's *Works* (vol. ii, p. 292) alludes pointedly to 'the malignant assiduity of Langbaine' in continually accusing Dryden of stealing his plots. But Langbaine had his defenders, among whom was Joseph Haslewood, who in his annotated copy quotes Scott, only to disagree: 'The Moderns affect to censure Langbain, but without any just reason.'

The lively warfare maintained among the annotators, as they commented on one another's notes, supplies a running commentary on the progress of English studies at this time; as for instance Percy's criticism of Oldys's scholarship: 'The Dates of Editions collected by Oldys, and subscribed *O* cannot always be depended on, because he has sometimes copied them from *Chetwood's English Theatre, &c.*; which abounds with a thousand false dates and forged titles' (on an opening fly-leaf, vol. i). On another fly-leaf in vol. i Percy quotes Edward Capel in Langbaine's favour: 'Mr. Capel, who drew up the catalogue of Mr. Garrick's Collection of Old Plays and consequently must know, tells me that Langbaine, tho' a poor dull creature is extremely exact and accurate in what he delivers, which may always be depended on.' After transcribing this note, George Steevens gives vent to his spleen against Capel: 'Mr. Percy should have informed the reader, however justly the charge of dullness may be alledged against poor Langbaine, that the same censure might as equitably fall on the person who furnished him with the remark, whose whole powers are only equal to the *difficiles nugæ* and whose labour is the *labor ineptiarum*.' In these

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Moderator*, 23 June 1692, where is a review of *The English Dramatick Poets*, with a 'vindication of Mr. Dryden from the imputation of a Plagiary, Ingrate, &c.'

manuscript notes we meet with some of the perennials of literary gossip, many of which have survived to our own day, some to adorn and others to disfigure our text-books of literary history. But whether since upheld or since disproved they are an unexpected indication of the resources at the command of the biographers and writers of memoirs in that age. Percy notes that 'there is a tradition that Shakespear was Davenant's real father, and that he had supplied the place of Goodman Davenant the Vintner of Oxford' (p. 456). Elsewhere he notes another tradition of Davenant, 'told me by Mr. Johnson', of how he 'lost his nose by an unfortunate Love encounter (as is well known)' (p. 112). Malone, after wrongly attributing this note to Steevens, traces the first appearance of this story to Chetwood's *History of the Stage* (1749). Some anecdotes of Cowley and Wycherley, dated as manuscript entries for 1767 by Percy, were apparently not considered worthy of transcription by Steevens when he borrowed Percy's 'Langbaine', and consequently did not pass on to Malone and Haslewood, who transcribed their notes from Steevens's copy. From Joseph Warton Percy learnt a current scandal of Cowley's death: 'He and his friend Spratt had been on a Visit from Chertsey to dine with some Acquaintances at no great distance from that Village, where the Glass had been put about briskly and they had staid late: So that in walking home in the evening they missed their way, and wandered about in the fields, till being weary they sat or lay down under a Hedge: Where Cowley caught the Cold that proved the Cause of his death' (p. 88). Percy was fond of any titbit from oral tradition, especially if it pertained to family history, for which source of information he had a life-long partiality. In his native county of Shropshire he picked up gossip of the ultimate fate of Wycherley's estate, more particularly concerning the nephew who had been disinherited by his uncle's death-bed marriage to a young wife. 'The said Nephew or his son had dyed and left two orphans, a boy and a girl: the girl was much in the Family of Sir Rowland Hill, Bart., where she encouraged an Intrigue with one of Sir Rowland's Footmen, and at length ran away with

him: This disgrace so affected her brother (a very promising Youth) that he soon after died of a broken Heart: and the said Footman enjoyed the whole Estate' (p. 514). The irrelevance of such gossip to the main purpose of assessing the merits of either the poetry of Cowley or the drama of Wycherley is sufficient proof that Literary History was still very much in its infancy in the year 1767.

A brief account of the varied features of these annotated copies of 'Langbaine' may be helpful, for two reasons: the constant use made of them in the eighteenth century for published works; and the need for clearing up the confusion which has arisen by later historians of literature obtaining valuable information from the different copies, and being misled by the *D.N.B.* and other reference-books as to their provenance.

William Oldys, whose annotations called attention so pointedly to the *English Dramatick Poets*, wrote his notes in two copies, both of which subsequently underwent strange experiences. According to his own account (p. 353 of the copy now in the Museum), during his absence from London, 1724-30, his first copy fell into the hands of Thomas Coxeter, who had bought it of a bookseller and refused to let Oldys see it again. The further history of this copy is related by Percy on a fly-leaf to vol. i of his own book: 'This *Langbaine* with Mr. Coxeter's Notes and those of Oldys's . . . was bought at the Sale of Mr. Coxeter's Books by Auction, by Theo. Cibber, who in conjunction with 2 or 3 others immediately undertook (upon the strength of those notes) to publish *The Lives of English Poets* which they did in weekly numbers, forming 5 Vols. 12mo 175 [3] but executed it in a very sorry manner, no where distinguishing Mr. Coxeter's curious Remarks from their own Trash; and giving no authorities for anything they say.' Many years later, in a note of Haslewood's on a fly-leaf of vol. i of his copy, we hear that this volume is still in existence: 'About 17 years since [i.e. 1796] when at Oxford I remember a volume belonging, I believe to one of the public libraries, being shown me by the present Dr. Bliss, that was supposed to have either belonged to Oldys, or Coxeter, and

was a Langbaine full of MS. notes, written in a small neat minute hand.' After this there is complete silence about Oldys's first copy, and scholars have enjoyed the use of his second annotated copy, safely housed in the British Museum, without troubling themselves about the first. The Museum copy (pressmark C. 28. g. 1) bearing on its title-page the inscription 'W. O. 1727', is not interleaved and split up into two or more volumes like the other copies which concern us, but remains 1 vol. 8vo, 1691, its pages crowded with manuscript notes written in the margins and between the lines of printed text, in an extremely small and none too legible hand. In 1763 it was in the possession of Dr. Thomas Birch, who had purchased it for a guinea at the sale of Oldys's books; and in that year he lent it to his friend Thomas Percy.<sup>1</sup> On Birch's death in 1766 it passed into the keeping of the Museum.

Percy's copy was mostly compiled in 1764-5, and consists of 4 vol. 8vo, 1691, interleaved, full of very neat transcriptions of Oldys's notes, and also many of his own. The bulk of these notes are Oldys's, but Percy's additions are of great interest. There are scores of references to Garrick's famous collection of old plays, which he studied carefully at this time, and a frequent marginal note reads 'Mr. Garrick's Copy', or 'So the Copy now before me'. There are also two lists of manuscript plays of Cosmo Manuche and Samuel Holland, which then were preserved in the library of Castle Ashby, Lord Northampton's residence;<sup>2</sup> the very existence of these plays is known to us to-day only in these notes. In his turn Percy lent his copy to others, who transcribed its contents; in 1769 to Thomas Warton,<sup>3</sup> who at this time was at work on the first volume of the *History of English Poetry*; soon after to George Steevens; and later, about 1783, to John Nichols, for the benefit of new editions of the *Spectator*,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Correspondence in Nichols's *Illustrations*, vii. 569, 573-4.

<sup>2</sup> For details of these manuscript plays see the *Times Lit. Suppl.*, 4 Oct., 8 and 15 Nov. 1934.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Percy-Warton Correspondence, *P.M.L.A.*, ed. Leah Dennis, pp. 1192-3 (1931).

*Tatler*, and *Guardian*. Towards the end of his life he presented it to Dr. Robert Anderson of Edinburgh; and after passing through the hands of David Laing this valuable book came finally to rest in the library of the University of Edinburgh.

David Garrick's annotated copy appears in the sale-catalogue of his library (1823), where a manuscript note of Garrick's writing is quoted: 'All the Plays marked thus \* in this Catalogue I bought of Dodsley. Those marked thus ° I have added to the Collection since.' The present whereabouts of this copy is unknown.

George Steevens's copy—compiled, as we have noted, in 1770 or soon after—is made up in 4 vols. 8vo and now housed in the Museum (Add. MSS. 22592–5), 'Purchased at Dr. P. Bliss's sale 21st August 1858'. On a fly-leaf of vol. i a note by Philip Bliss fills in the history of this copy: 'This Copy was sold at the auction of Mr. Steevens's Library in 1800 to Richardson the bookseller for 9. 0. 0, who resold it to Mr. Brydges in the same year for fourteen guineas. At the sale of the Lee Priory Library in 1834 it fell into the hands of Thorpe of Bedford Street, Covent Garden, from whom I purchased it Feb. 7 1835 for nine guineas.' A fly-leaf of vol. i bears the signatures of 'S. E. Brydges. June 1800' and 'T. B. B. Barrett, Lee Library, Oct<sup>r</sup> 1810'. It contains, in its further accumulation of annotation, the notes of Isaac Reed and Thomas Park. Reed's own 'Langbaine' went into the Heber Library. Later scholars have praised Steevens for providing here so many valuable references to Garrick's collection of plays—but in this instance this praise is not deserved. It is true that Steevens handled these plays, as he himself tells us in his preface to the 1773 edition of Johnson's *Shakespeare*; but his Garrick references in the 'Langbaine' are transcripts of Percy's earlier notes.

Edmund Malone's copy is to-day housed in the Bodleian Library (press-mark M. 129–32). He transcribed from Steevens's copy in 1777, as he himself informs us—and added copious notes of his own during the next ten years. This also is made up of four interleaved volumes 8vo, and has proved a store of information for later editors of our earlier drama.

Two copies more remain to be noted, both housed in the Museum, and both continually in use. Joseph Haslewood's copy, 2 vol. 8vo interleaved (press-mark C. 45. d. 14) was compiled from the Steevens copy, when this was in the Lee Priory Library. Haslewood assisted Brydges with the *British Bibliographer*, 4 vols., 1810-14, and it was at this time that he annotated his 'Langbaine'. Many of the notes in this copy are wrongly attributed, and Steevens receives credit for countless annotations which we can still read in Percy's book and even in Oldys's. A selection of Haslewood's own notes was printed in the account of Gerard Langbaine in Bliss's edition of Anthony Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses* (1820). Finally there is the Museum copy, C. 57. l. 12, made up of 2 vol. 8vo interleaved, which at various times has been declared to be the copy once owned by Thomas Percy or Halliwell-Phillipps. Scholars have been misled by a manuscript note written on an opening fly-leaf—'Can it be Bishop Percy's own copy. . . . See the autograph Thomas Percy, 1765, on the last page of the printed work,' etc. This is clearly only a conjecture, and in fact the 'last page of the printed work' does not contain Percy's autograph but some one's page-references to Percy's 'Langbaine', as this unknown person saw it in 1765.<sup>1</sup> The pagination is given quite correctly. To add to the confusion, the *D.N.B.* (art. 'Langbaine') assumes this copy to be Percy's, and gives it the press-mark of Haslewood's copy! To ascribe it to Halliwell-Phillipps also presents difficulties, for his accounts of certain authors in his *Dictionary of Old English Plays* (1860) do not correspond with the details of those authors supplied in the manuscript notes in this copy. He is content in these cases to reprint the relevant entries from the *Biographia Dramatica* (1812 ed.), and obviously had no further information at hand. On the whole C. 57. l. 12 is not an important copy, for its annotations are few and not well chosen.

As Halliwell-Phillipps points out in the preface to his

<sup>1</sup> Whereas the handwriting in all the other copies can be surely identified, as that of Oldys, Percy, Steevens, &c., this copy still presents its problem to the 'neolographer'.

*Dictionary*, the indebtedness of all later editors and historians to Langbaine (and, we may add, to Oldys and his fellow annotators) cannot be overstated. As late as 1812 the third edition of the *Biographia Dramatica* was incorporating both correct and incorrect data from the *English Dramatick Poets* (1691), and Halliwell-Phillipps spoke truly when he said: 'Gerard Langbaine has had but scanty justice meted out to him by his successors. Although his work has been extensively used by all of them, his name is rarely mentioned as the original compiler.' It was his curious fate to receive the highest compliment, paid in the most graceless fashion: to have his book become the most widely consulted on its subject for a whole century, and yet himself to remain hidden and obscure behind the massive annotations of his readers.<sup>1</sup>

A. WATKIN-JONES.

<sup>1</sup> We have been concerned solely with Langbaine's own edition of the *English Dramatick Poets* (1691): Gildon's posthumous edition of 1699 has never been accepted as genuine 'Langbaine'.

## COLERIDGE'S CRITICAL TERMINOLOGY

The instinctive passion in the mind for a *one word* to express *one act* of feeling.—*Anima Poetae*.

NOTHING is more urgently needed, as a basis for a real history of literary criticism, than a survey of the growth of critical terminology. For many years I have been putting together an historical dictionary of critical terms, both in literature and the fine arts, endeavouring to show exactly which terms were first employed by the various critics, at what dates they were invented, and, wherever possible, the critical needs of the time in response to which the different terms emerged. In the course of this work the names of two critics presented themselves with an agreeable frequency, Dryden and Coleridge; and it is not without significance that our two great road-makers in critical method should emerge so prominently in a discussion of critical terminology.

The scattered facts contained in such a dictionary and the sources explored for its construction throw much light on critical growth in England. Chaucer stands on the threshold of the Renaissance with his use of scholastic and rhetorical abstractions of the Middle Ages, and his early employment (which he shares frequently with Gower) of the terms of Renaissance decoration and mythology. The Humanist period is the most fruitful of all, supplementing the contributions of the mediæval encyclopædists with wholesale deliveries of terms used in all the arts, crafts, and sciences, and above all, in Lydgate and his later contemporaries, with terms used in abstract discussion emerging from theology into philosophy and a primitive psychology. Critical discussion in its riper periods makes much use of technical terms transferred from arts and sciences in which they are indigenous, and one of the great tasks awaiting English lexicography is a systematic survey of the growth of terms within each study—philosophy, chemistry, geography, medicine, &c., &c. This is not a task which can be accomplished by methodical and mechanical



gutting of the *O.E.D.* (since it is in these matters that the great dictionary is most deficient), but by analysis of technical works in the strict chronological order of their appearance. This preliminary work is a necessity for any serious study of the growth of critical terminology. When Coleridge writes metaphorically, in a note-book of 1795, that the heart is *dephlogisticated*, we know where we are, since the term has its home in the land of chemistry, its owner in the chemist Priestley, and its date in 1775; but when Coleridge speaks in 1818 of 'contemplating in all Electrical phenomena the operation of a Law which runs through all Nature, viz. the law of *polarity*, or the manifestation of one power by opposite forces', we are up against a serious and complicated problem. First of all, by his underlining of the word, it is clear that Coleridge is either proud of his invention of it, or regards it as a significant and careful use; secondly, the word is a valuable contribution to our critical armoury, and its uses have not yet been exhausted; thirdly, the *O.E.D.* can find no earlier use of the term in this special shade of usage; fourthly, it is clear from his reference to 'the polarity of the magnet', in the same encyclopaedia article on 'Method', that this is not merely a loose employment of the normal use of the word; and lastly, the fact that this use is a subtle and thought-out transference of a known term to the great central problem of Coleridge's critical researches into the *esemplastic* power, the *coadunating* faculty, and the problem of *multëity* in unity, gives an emotional significance of the highest order to this otherwise cold technical term.

Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the individual arts, crafts, and sciences were building up an armoury of technical terms to be pillaged later by the critics. Lomazzo and Pliny were providing artistic terms, music was giving its subtle aid to literary discrimination, until, by the end of the sixteenth century, the age of literary inventories and of ancient *versus* modern comparisons was passing into a critical age, the age of Jonson, Hobbes, Dryden, and Rymer. It is a happy and revealing accident that the very noun *critic* and the adjective *critical* should show this progress, by being

originally terms of medicine, and being found for the first time, at this transitional date, in the works of Shakespeare. The seventeenth century, the supreme Age of Reason, is particularly rich in terms of philosophy and psychology, soon to be transferred to criticism (More and Cudworth have not received our sufficient gratitude), and in the confusion of literary and artistic criticism, under the domination of the Rules and the Kinds, England imports vast quantities of critical terms from Italy and France with the help of Arundel, Evelyn, and others. Milton's use of *verisimilitude* is in itself an astonishing and revealing land-mark. The story of Dryden's contribution to critical terminology, which I hope to tell shortly, cannot be completed without recognition of his deference to France in matters of art jargon as well as literary theory. The very word *contrast*, without which no examination paper in literary criticism is complete, is found almost for the first time in his pages, just as the critical method which it implies was displayed by him with pioneer mastery. The eighteenth century, the Age of Romantic Unrest, employed, though it did not originate, the facile terminology of connoisseurship (or *connoissance* as Prior once suggested calling it), the notions of *amusing* and *picturesque*, but more seriously expanded those terms dealing with the processes of artistic creation and originality which justify the pre-Romantic period as an autonomous period, and make the so-called Romantic Period more a period of decadence than a triumphant culmination of the later eighteenth century. For a proper understanding of Coleridge's critical terminology it would be necessary to explore those activities of the eighteenth century which impressed him, since it was in the age of Priestley, of Mesmer, of Hartley, of Lavater, of Lessing, and of Kant that he found the terms he utilized without inventing, rather than the more spectacular terms he invented without utilizing.

Coleridge had a passion for words, for their personality and for their musical and muscular conjunction. In the famous early note-book of 1795-8, so nobly used by Professor Livingston Lowes, he records his interest in words like

*protoplast, dephlogisticated, and chiliographic*; he tries out phrases and sentences which appear in exuberant and verbally intoxicated letters to his friends during the year 1796. 'Mr Meanly—that tobacco-toothed Parson with a *majestic periphery of guts*': 'I smoked yesterday afternoon—and then imprudently went into the sea—the consequence was that on my return I was taken sick—and *my triumphant tripes cataracted most Niagara-ishly*'. On a canvassing tour 'on lifting up the latch beheld a tall old Hag, *whose soul-gelding ugliness would chill to eternal chastity a cantharidized satyr*'. His tortured punning is another facet of this interest, and he threatened a friend with a paradise in which 'I would write Odes and Sonnets Morning and Evening, and metaphysicize at noon, and of rainy days I would overwhelm you with an Avalanche of Puns and Conundrums *loosened by sudden thaw from the Alps of my imagination*'. The concluding phrase, which I have italicized, is an accurate description of the accidental nature of his logopoetic activity. His simple pride in this faculty is disarming: 'What did you think of that case I translated for you from the German? That I was a well-meaning *Sutor* who had ultra-crepidated with more zeal than wisdom! I give myself credit for that word "ultra-crepidated", it started up in my Brain like a creation'; and it even excuses a less spontaneous construction: 'with what an athanasiophagus grin we shall march together—we poets: . . . By the word athanasiophagus I mean devouring immortality by anticipation! 'Tis a sweet word!' That he was not selfish in his admiration of word-coinage is shown by the delight with which he greets an achievement of Southey's. 'Metaphysician! Do, Southey, keep to your own most excellent word (for the insertion of which you deserve a pension far more than Johnson for his Dictionary) and always say *Metapothecaries*.'

Were his inventions the mere result of accident or inspiration there would be no need to do more than note their occurrence; but they were in most cases the result of a definite attitude and a conscious process of amelioration applied to a defect in nomenclature to which Coleridge persistently

drew attention. He believed in and was actuated by 'the instinctive passion in the mind for a *one word* to express *one act* of feeling', a passion shared later by Flaubert. It was the clarification induced by his ruling passion of conversation that led him to discover what for him was the best method. 'This species of analysis, i.e. *desynonymizative*, best of all—it so naturally arises out of conversation': 'in all societies there exists an instinct of growth, a certain collective, unconscious good sense working progressively to desynonymize those words originally of the same meaning, which the conflux of dialects had supplied to the more homogeneous languages': it was this which led him to his distinction between *imagination* and *fancy*, and this which made him almost fanatically anxious about the word *Poetry*. 'It were perhaps to be wished, that we should desynonymize the two words, *Poetry* and *Poesy*, by using the latter, as the generic name of all the fine Arts: for every work of Genius, containing the End in the Means is a *ποίησις*, as distinguished from a mere *σύνταξις*, or collocation for an external and conventional end.' In his *Principles of Genial Criticism*, his favourite piece of critical writing and perhaps his nearest approach to an ordered aesthetic system, he produces some valuable distinctions on the principle that 'There are few mental exertions more instructive, or which are capable of being rendered more entertaining, than the attempt to establish and exemplify the distinct meaning of terms, often confounded in common use, and considered as mere synonyms. Such are the words, Agreeable, Beautiful, Picturesque, Grand, Sublime.' The stimulus given by this attitude and the examples which always accompanied the advice were productive of far-reaching results throughout the nineteenth century. It is worth making a comparison with Remy de Gourmont's system of 'Dissociation of Ideas' and its effect on recent critical thinking.

A valuable glimpse into Coleridge's intentions and methods is given by a passage in the *Principles of Genial Criticism* of 1814 reproduced with some slight variation in the *Biographia Literaria* of 1817:

The first lesson of philosophic discipline is to wean the student's attention from the Degrees of things, which alone form the vocabulary of common life, and to direct it to the *KIND* abstracted from *degree*. Thus the chemical student is taught not to be startled at disquisitions on the heat in ice, or on latent and fixible light.

In this case, he must either use old words with new meanings, the plan adopted by Dr. Darwin in his *Zoonomia*; or he must borrow from the schools, or himself coin a nomenclature exclusively appropriated to his subject [after the example of Linnaeus]<sup>1</sup> after the example of the French chemists, and indeed of all eminent natural philosophers and historians in all countries.

I have, therefore, in two or three instances ventured on a disused or scholastic term, where without it I could not have avoided confusion or ambiguity. Thus, to express in one word what belongs to the senses or the recipient and more passive faculty of the soul, I have re-introduced the word *sensuous*, used, among many others of our elder writers, by Milton, in his exquisite definition of poetry as 'simple, sensuous, passionate': because the term *sensual* is seldom used at present, except in a bad sense [or at least as a moral distinction; while *sensitive* and *sensible* would each convey a different meaning].<sup>1</sup> Thus too, I have restored the words, *intuition* and *intuitive*, to their original sense—'an intuition', says Hooker, 'that is, a direct and immediate beholding or presentation of an object to the mind through the senses or the imagination'.—Thus geometrical truths are all intuitive, or accompanied by an intuition.

The three points which emerge from these statements are applicable to his whole word-creating activity: the revival of old words in a new and more exact sense, the borrowing from the technicalities of other disciplines, including botany, chemistry, and philosophy, and the frank return to scholastic procedure. In the same year as the publication of the *Biographia Literaria* his mind is much on this problem:

A man must have felt the pain of being compelled to express himself either laxly or paraphrastically . . . in order to understand how much a metaphysician suffers from not daring to

<sup>1</sup> I have made up this quotation by combining all the illustrations given in both the *Principles of Genial Criticism* and the *Biographia Literaria*.

adopt the *ivitatis* and *eitatis* of the schoolmen as objectivity, subjectivity, negativity,<sup>1</sup> positivity.

and in the *Biographia Literaria* he frankly says:

The very words, *objective* and *subjective*, of such constant recurrence in the schools of yore, I have ventured to re-introduce, because I could not so briefly or conveniently by any more familiar terms distinguish the percipere from the percipi.

It is a commonplace of academic jest to laugh at Coleridge's *om-m-ject* and *sum-m-ject*, but the noise of laughter drowns an explanation of Coleridge's position in the history of English thinking. The scholastic world attracted Coleridge by the formalism and neatness of its processes, and by the welcome clarity of its nomenclature, in so far as it had achieved discrimination. This clarity was of supreme importance in Coleridge's attempt to clarify his own aesthetic system:

In order to express '*the many*', as simply contra-distinguished from '*the one*', I have hazarded the smile of the reader, by introducing to his acquaintance, from the forgotten terminology of the old schoolmen, the phrase *multēity*, because I felt that I could not substitute *multitude*, without more or less connecting with it the notion of '*a great many*'. Thus the Philosopher of the later Platonic, or Alexandrine School, named the triangle the first-born of beauty, it being the first and simplest symbol of *multēity in unity*. *Principles of Genial Criticism*.

Much against my will I repeat this scholastic term, *multēity*, but I have sought in vain for an unequivocal word of a less repulsive character that would convey the notion in a positive and not comparative sense in kind, as opposed to the *unum et simplex*, not in degree, as contrasted with the *few*. *Theory of Life*.

The terms 'objective' and 'subjective' had been used sporadically in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in reminiscence of scholastic use, but it was not until the arrival of Kant's philosophy that an urgent and modern need was experienced for exact discrimination. To Coleridge's example in 1817 is due almost entirely the widespread adoption of

<sup>1</sup> The *O.E.D.* has nothing earlier than 1860 for this word.

these indispensable terms, and De Quincey has an interesting comment in his note on the word *objective*:

This word, so nearly unintelligible in 1821, so intensely scholastic, and consequently, when surrounded by familiar and vernacular words, so apparently pedantic, yet, on the other hand, so indispensable to accurate thinking, and to wide thinking, has since 1821 become too common to need any apology.

This marriage between scholastic and Kantian terminology explains many of Coleridge's apparent neologisms. To explore adequately the effect on Coleridge of his German reading would distort the proportions of this present study, but it would not be out of place to indicate the lines upon which such an investigation must be made. Here the problem is more complicated and the field of inquiry more restricted. It is not so much a question of recording Coleridge's inventions as his adoptions. Fortunately we have a pretty good idea of the German books he read. He has left many volumes annotated in his own hand, he refers to many more and quotes from them, and in addition kind friends from time to time point to his supposed plagiarisms. One likely source of information proves singularly disappointing. The list of books borrowed from the University Library at Göttingen refers us merely to Warton's *History of English Poetry* and to works on German language and early literature. The annotated volumes are of far greater importance, since they provide us with works of German science and philosophy which Coleridge has read page by page and sentence by sentence. One note is of special value in dating his philosophical experience: 'Before I left Germany in 1799 I procured from the Nachdrucker or privileged Book-pirates a thin Octavo of two or at most 3 Sheets, under the name of Kant's Logic. Doubtless, published by, or from the Notes of, one of his Lecture-pupils. I highly approved of it. . . . This book I have lost.' His marginalia to Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Schubert, and Steffens are fascinating, particularly in their headlong enthusiasm, incoherence, and macaronic quality. His familiarity with German is sufficient to make him weld German technical terms and phrases into a curious

hybrid language of comment. The special difficulty of this inquiry is to discover which *ordinary English-sounding* words, now part of critical discussion, were first acclimatized by Coleridge in the course of his German reading. It is easy enough to trace *Heart-lore* to *Herzlehre* when Coleridge himself adds the German in brackets, because the foreign accent is still detectable. His abortive suggestion, 'Why might we not adopt the German *allgemein*, i.e. all-common', contains the elements of its own defeat, and we are compelled, for the immediate purposes of this essay, to return to the more outstanding importations.

Kant is a valuable source. Coleridge's use of *categorical imperative* is earlier than the illustration in the *O.E.D.*, and his use of *noumena* is early and interesting. In his notes on Shakespeare's comedies he quotes Lafeu's remark in *All's Well that Ends Well*, II. iii:

They say miracles are past; and we have our philosophical persons, to make modern and familiar, things supernatural and causeless—

and points out that 'Shakespeare, inspired as it might seem, with all knowledge, here uses the word causeless in its strict philosophical sense, cause being truly predicable only of phenomena, i.e. things natural, not of noumena or things supernatural'. This distinction between *noumenon* and *phenomenon* was first established by Kant, and used first in English by William Taylor of Norwich, the great pioneer in German studies, in 1798, but Coleridge seems to be the first to introduce it into literary criticism. The word *psychological*, closely associated with Kant, has a more complicated history. *Psychology*, introduced in Germany by Wolff in 1732, is first used as an English word in 1748 by Hartley, the philosopher, after whom Coleridge named his first-born: 'Psychology, or the theory of the Human Mind, with that of the intellectual Principles of Brute Animals.' Coleridge uses *psychologist* in the *Biographia Literaria*, and the German association of these words is recognized in Shelley's *Peter Bell the Third*:

Five thousand crammed octavo pages  
Of German psychologies.



Coleridge's priority in the use of *psychological*, however, needs demonstration. The *O.E.D.* gives the credit to Isaac D'Israeli in 1812: 'I would paint what has not been unhappily called the psychological character. *Note.* From the Grecian *Psyche*, or the soul, the Germans have borrowed this expressive term.' The next illustration is the well-known and highly important one from Coleridge's 'Discourse on Method' in the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana* in 1818:

Shakespeare was pursuing two Methods at once; and besides the Psychological\* Method, he had also to attend to the poetical.

\* We beg pardon for the use of this *insolens verbum*; but it is one of which our language stands in great need. We have no single term to express the philosophy of the human mind: and what is worse, the principles of that philosophy are commonly called *metaphysical*, a word of a very different meaning.

There is, however, a much earlier use by Coleridge, to which, I think, attention has not previously been drawn. In the famous folio of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays borrowed by Coleridge from Lamb, and returned with interest in the form of marginal notes, there is one comment worthy of note: 'A noble subject for the few noble minds capable of treating it would be this: What are the probable, what the possible defects of *genius*, & of each given *sort* of *genius*? and of course what defects are psychologically impossible.' This is before October 1811, when the volume was returned to Lamb. D'Israeli may be compensated for this loss of priority by being regarded so far as the originator of the term *Elizabethan*, hitherto credited by the *O.E.D.* to Coleridge.

Another word of German origin of special interest to students of Coleridge is *aesthetic*. Coleridge was the earliest English literary critic to concern himself with an aesthetic system. His *Biographia Literaria* was the first book to introduce Schelling's aesthetic doctrines into England, and his coincidences with Schlegel's aesthetic ideas caused him much pain, as well as pride in their common indebtedness to Kant's methods of analysis. His *Principles of Genial Criticism Concerning the Fine Arts* brings Coleridge into direct discipleship of the discriminating Lessing, whose life he once pro-

posed to write. In the history of the English use of the word there is an interesting confusion. In the modern sense of 'philosophy of taste or beauty' the word was introduced in Germany by Baumgarten in 1750. Its more technical meaning is concerned with 'perception by the senses', and the two meanings struggled for over half a century. Kant added the weight of his authority to the more restricted meaning, and this was the first to be used in England. The *O.E.D.* quotes a review of Kant in the first number of the *Edinburgh Review* in 1803, 'the study of transcendental aesthetics', as well as a use by William Taylor of Norwich in 1798, 'In the dialect peculiar to Professor Kant . . . his *receptivity* for aesthetic gratification is not delicate'; but dates the introduction of the word in the modern sense as late as 1832, when the *Penny Cyclopaedia* defines it: 'Æsthetics (*Æsthetik*) is the designation given by German writers to a branch of philosophical inquiry, the object of which is a philosophical theory of the beautiful.' Coleridge, however, is familiar with the word and uses it much earlier. In a letter to William Blackwood in October 1821 he discusses the nature of the *Edinburgh Magazine* 'which may, I think, be comprised in three terms, as Philosophical, Philological, and aesthetic Miscellany'. To this he adds one of his fascinating and revealing postscripts:

P.S. I wish I could find a more familiar word than aesthetic for works of taste and criticism. It is, however, in all respects better, and of more reputable origin, than belletristic.<sup>1</sup> To be sure, there is *tasty*; but that has been long ago emasculated for all unworthy uses by milliners, tailors, and the androgynous correlatives of both, formerly called its, and now yclept dandies.

As our language, therefore, contains no other *usable* adjective, to express that coincidence of form, feeling, and intellect, that something, which confirming the inner and the outward senses, becomes a new sense in itself, to be tried by laws of its own, and acknowledging the laws of the understanding so far only as not to contradict them; . . . there is reason to hope, that the term *aesthetic* will be brought into common use as soon as distinct thoughts and definite expressions shall once more become the requisite accomplishment of a gentleman.

<sup>1</sup> This is the earliest instance of *belletristic* given in the *O.E.D.*

He looks back on the Elizabethan age 'when the precise yet pregnant terminology of the schools gave bone and muscle to the diction of poetry and eloquence, and received from them in return passion and harmony'. But ten years earlier than this is a letter, of March 1811, to Godwin, whom he addresses as 'the critic who, in the life of Chaucer, has given us, if not principles of *æsthetic* or taste, yet more and better data for principles than had hitherto existed in our language'. A valuable light on the channel by which such words came into England is afforded by a letter of Crabb Robinson's from Frankfort in June 1802: 'I had a few days since the pleasure of conversing with ff. Schlegel one of the first living Poets & a great aesthetiker he is the Bro<sup>r</sup> of the translator of Shakespear.'

A word whose investigation seems to remove one portion of Coleridge's German debt is *statuesque*. He uses it frequently. 'Their productions were, if the expression may be allowed, statuesque, whilst those of the moderns are picturesque.' He is generally supposed to have borrowed this word from Schlegel, but in 1799, years before he had ever heard of Schlegel, he wrote from Göttingen: 'Never did I behold aught so impressively picturesque, or rather Statuesque, as these groups of women in all their various attitudes.' It is possible that the contrast between *statuesque* and *picturesque* as ancient and modern was a borrowing from Schlegel or Schiller, but the term seems to have come to him from the Alps of his imagination.

The most notorious of all Coleridge's word-coinages, *esemplastic*, is also of German extraction. Chapter XIII of the *Biographia Literaria* is headed 'On the imagination, or esemplastic power', and Chapter X opens with an imaginary dialogue: '*Esemplastic. The word is not in Johnson, nor have I met with it elsewhere.*' 'Neither have I. I constructed it myself from the Greek words, εἰς ἐν πλάττειν, to shape into one; because, having to convey a new sense, I thought that a new term would both aid the recollection of my meaning, and prevent its being confounded with the usual import of the word, imagination.' '*But this is pedantry!*' 'Not neces-

sarily so, I hope.' The word, clumsy and unsuccessful as it is, is nevertheless the centre of Coleridge's aesthetic doctrines. Time after time he had tried to express concisely his doctrines of unity, as *multiëity in unity*; or by means of the term *polarity* or, as in a manuscript note on 'Beauty', 'not the Unity resulting but the mode of the *conspiration* of the manifold to the One. The Manifold must be melted into the One'; or by means of the idea of *coadunation*, 'Interpenetratively, as two globules of quicksilver, and co-adunatively'. As early as 1802 he wrote to William Sotheby of Hebrew poetry, 'At best, it is but fancy, or the aggregating faculty, not imagination or the *modifying* and coadunating faculty.' This doctrine of coadunation appears in the *Anima Poetae* under the year 1802, 'What are our feelings of this kind but a motion IMAGINED, with the feelings that would accompany that motion, less distinguished, more blended, more rapid, more confused, and thereby, co-adunated?'. The link with the term *esemplastic* is provided by a note in *Anima Poetae* ascribed to the year 1810. We can watch the term growing:

Imagination. How excellently the German *Einbildungskraft* expresses this prime and loftiest faculty, the power of coadunation, the faculty that forms the many into one—in-eins-bildung! Eisenoplasmy, or esenoplastic<sup>1</sup> power, is contradistinguished from fantasy, or the mirrorment, either catoptric or metoptric—repeating singly, or by transposition—and again, involuntary or in dreams, or by an act of the will.

The term *Einbildungskraft* was perfectly familiar to him, above all in J. G. E. Maass's *Versuch über die Einbildungskraft* (1797), a book which he annotated and borrowed from. This normal word for imagination has no implication of unifying, but Coleridge was misled by Schelling's play on the elements of the word to imagine that the syllable *ein* had something to do with the word meaning *one*. Schelling, in his *Vorlesungen über die Methode der akademischen Studien*, Tübingen, 1803, p. 313, had spoken of 'Die letztere, obgleich ganz absolut vollkommene In: Eins: Bildung des Realen und

<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting to know whether the manuscript has been accurately transcribed here.

Idealen'; and, in his *Darlegung des wahren Verhältnisses der Naturphilosophie zu der verbesserten Fichte'schen Lehre*, Tübingen, 1806, p. 61, had said: 'Ist das Band die lebendige In-Eins-Bildung des Einen mit dem Vielen: so ist nothwendig mit dem Band zumal auch das aus Einheit und Vielheit Eingewordene.' Coleridge certainly knew the later volume, and there is no reason to seek further explanation. It is quite possible that between 1806 and 1810 Coleridge had completely forgotten that he owed the *In-Eins-Bildung* to Schelling, but such a possibility does not minimize his ultimate indebtedness.

The study of Coleridge's German reading has taken us somewhat far afield, and it would be as well to return to his manipulation of English words. One of the most interesting categories among Coleridge's innovations is made up of words transferred from their uses in other arts and sciences, and made to illuminate the study of literature and the arts. He turns to medicine: 'I may add from myself, that what medical physiologists affirm of certain *secretions* applies equally to our thoughts; they too must be taken up again into the circulation, and be again and again *re-secreted* in order to ensure a healthful vigour, both to the mind and to its intellectual offspring.' He learns from the chemistry of dyeing:

Metre therefore having been connected with *poetry* most often and by a peculiar fitness, whatever else is combined with *metre* must, though it be not itself *essentially* poetic, have nevertheless some property in common with poetry, as an inter-medium of affinity, a sort (if I may dare borrow a well-known phrase from technical chemistry) of *mordant* between it and the super-added metre—

and again, in *The Friend*, he writes of 'the link or *mordant* by which philosophy becomes scientific and the sciences philosophical'. He praises Tom Wedgwood's taste in poetry by saying, 'you are a perfect *electrometer* in these things'. The *O.E.D.* acknowledges his priority in the special use of *potence*: 'I shall venture to use *potence*, in order to express a specific degree of a power, in imitation of the algebraists. I have even

hazarded the new verb *potenziare*, with its derivatives, in order to express the combination or transfer of powers.' There are dozens of instances of this kind, but the best of all occurs in a well-known tribute to Wordsworth in the *Biographia Literaria*, of which the first half is the more familiar by being frequently quoted apart from its context:

It was the union of deep feeling with profound thought; the fine balance of truth in observing, with the imaginative faculty in modifying the objects observed; and above all the original gift of spreading the tone, the *atmosphere*, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world around forms, incidents, and situations, of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew-drops.

Here the word *atmosphere* has been taken away from its technical meaning and applied, I believe for the first time, to literature in a manner much needed, though since much abused. There is a tact and a rightness about the use of the word here which *makes* the criticism, just as the word *unmechanic* does in his tribute to Lamb: 'His taste acts so as to appear like the unmechanic simplicity of an instinct.'

It is not uninteresting to draw up a list of Coleridge's failures in word-construction. They include colloquial as well as pedantic terms: *busyness*, *credibilizing*, *oneness*, *presentimental*, *expectability*, and *novellish*, as well as *esemplastic*, *interadditive*, *extroitive*, *catenulating*, *poematic*, *after-consciousness*, and *pantisocratize*. 'May the Almighty Pantisocratizer of Souls pantisocratize the Earth, and bless you and S. T. Coleridge.'

One important part of Coleridge's contribution to critical discussion consists not merely in separate words, but in phrases which in many cases have a familiar and modern sound. Of the scores of really valuable and helpful phrases it is not necessary in this short study to do more than indicate their nature: *totality of interest*, *mechanical talent*, *aesthetic logic*, *accrescence of objectivity*, *germ of a character*, *real-life diction*, *under-current of feeling*, *the general tissue of the style*, *sense of inferiority*, *the technique of poetry*, *poetical logic*.

There are several terms which have had a valuable and successful career since their introduction by Coleridge, and which illustrate the best side of his process of creation. It is not without significance that the critic who fought for the position that Shakespeare was a self-conscious artist whose judgement was as great as his genius should have originated the critical term *self-conscious*. I do not think anything truer or more pertinent has ever been said about Shakespeare than Coleridge's 'Our own Shakespeare, himself a nature humanized, a genial<sup>1</sup> understanding directing self-consciously a power and an implicit wisdom deeper than consciousness'. Shakespeare owes him a debt for the fine epithet *myriad-minded*: 'Ἀνὴρ μυριόνοῦς, a phrase which I have borrowed from a Greek monk, who applies it to a Patriarch of Constantinople.'

More generally valuable are terms like *idealize*, *intellectualize*, *organic*, and *organization*. Each of these has its special contribution. In 1800 he writes to Humphry Davy, 'our kettle swung over the fire hanging from the branch of a Fir-tree, and I lay and saw the woods and mountains, and lake all trembling, and as it were *idealized* thro' the subtle smoke which rose up from the clear red embers of the fir-apples, which we had collected'. By underlining the word Coleridge indicated his recognition of a new and special sense he was giving to it. In 1818 in the *Essay on Method* he wrote: 'In the greatest poets we find Nature idealized through the creative power of a profound yet observant meditation'; in the *Biographia Literaria* he speaks of 'the *idealized* figures of the Apollo Belvedere and the Farnese Hercules'; and later still 'The tragic fact idealizes his characters'. Nobody before Coleridge seems to have used the term for purposes of literary or artistic criticism. Again, nobody before him seems to have used *intellectualize*: 'Shakespeare . . . brings forward no subject which he does not moralize or intellectualize.' A distinction of the highest importance which we owe to Coleridge is that between the *organic* and the *mechanical*,

<sup>1</sup> This is, of course, the German use 'pertaining to genius', in which Coleridge antedates the *O.E.D.* by at least eleven years.

'The Fitness must not be a conspiracy of component but of constituent Parts, not of parts *put* to each other, but of distinct but indivisible parts growing out of a common antecedent Unity, or productive Life & Will. It must be an organic not a mechanic fitness.' Under the general stimulus of Schlegel, but in his own words, he makes the distinction more formal:

The ground of the mistake, as has been well remarked by a continental critic, lies in the confounding mechanical regularity with organic form, not necessarily arising out of the properties of the material, as when to a mass of wet clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes as it develops itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the same with the perfection of its outward form.

The attractiveness of such a contrast to a critic is obvious, and one is reminded of a more recent distinction, between *kinetic* and *potential* in literature, established by Mr. Arthur Ransome, and taken up with delight by Professor Lascelles Abercrombie. With one last word this survey must close, and that is the very modern-sounding piece of art-jargon *organization*. Coleridge used the term in slightly varying senses, connected with his unifying theory of art. Speaking of historical drama he says: 'It takes, therefore, that part of real history which is the least known, and infuses a principle of life and organization into the naked facts, and makes them all the framework of an animated whole'; and elsewhere he says categorically: 'Invention depends altogether upon execution or organization.' The earliest direct application of the term to painting is found in robust jargon in 1816 when J. Scott wrote, 'In the organization of forms, Rubens was a most extraordinary being'.

This preliminary survey of a side of Coleridge's activity which in itself is of the highest importance for the understanding of his critical method and his historical position in the development of criticism must not be taken as implying that the most valuable part of his critical writing lies in those pages wherein he uses most jargon. The very opposite is my



own belief. So far as analytical interest is concerned the pages of jargon and of groping, those pages of which Walter Pater wrote that 'His very language is forced and broken lest some saving formula should be lost', are of supreme importance to the historian of English criticism; but so far as critical achievement is concerned, it must be sought in those pages in which he uses the plain and almost colloquial language of his day, free from any burden of scholastic terminology, scientific technicalities, or German philosophic jargon. When he institutes a comparison between the poetry of Cowper and of Thomson, he uses the King's English: 'The love of nature seems to have led Thomson to a chearful religion; and a gloomy religion to have led Cowper to a love of nature. The one would carry his fellow-men along with him into nature; the other flies to nature from his fellow-men. In chastity of diction however, and the harmony of blank verse, Cowper leaves Thomson immeasurably behind him; yet still I feel the latter to have been the *born poet*.' This faculty of simple and potent clarity, achieved by masterly disposition of clearly thought-out ideas, is found as early as 1797 in a letter to Cottle: 'The *story* of Milton might be told in two pages—it is this which distinguishes an *Epic Poem* from a *Romance in metre*. Observe the march of Milton—his severe application, his laborious polish, his deep metaphysical researches, his prayers to God before he began his great poem, all that could lift and swell his intellect, became his daily food.' But best illustration of all is his fine passage on the imagination as a reconciliation of opposites:

This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, controul reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion, with more than usual order; judgement ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the

natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry.

In this he calls only on distilled phrasing and sensitive balance, and throws overboard his whole armoury of *esemplasy*, *multēity*, and *coadunation*.

J. ISAACS.

## THE PROBLEM OF THE SCOTTISH POET

THROUGHOUT the seventeenth, the eighteenth, and even part of the nineteenth century the cultured, educated Scot spoke, among his fellow Scots, his Scottish vernacular; but if he wrote—philosophy, history, theology, poetry, economics, whatever the theme—he wrote in English. The position to-day is reversed. He speaks English, a northern English certainly, *lingua inglese in bocca scozzese* (unless early education or social ambition has further polished and disguised his speech), but he may, if he is literary, compose verses in Scots or write a novel of Scottish life in which the dialogues are in Scots or in what passes as Scots. The late Professor Mair wrote Scots poems no better if no worse than those of many others. His Greek renderings of some Scots poems are, or seem, better than the originals.

The interaction between the two varieties of one language, which is what they are, the standard English of the southern kingdom and the northern English, Inglis, which had established itself as the speech of the Kingdom of Scotland (so far as this was not Gaelic), began early. The Scottish poets, from Barbour to Montgomery, wrote in their own northern tongue, and a very noble tongue it is. But these Scottish Makars were no forerunners of Wordsworth. The speech of the poet was not for them the language of every day, but a nobler rhetoric, composed like the chorus of a Greek tragedy in an artificial, decorative diction, the aureate style which was the fashion in various countries in the fifteenth century, the diction of the French *rhétoriqueurs*, the 'schuim' or 'foam' of the *Rederijkers* of the Low Countries. And some of the Scots poets' 'rhetorike' was borrowed from the English poets:

O moral Gower, and Lydgate laureate,  
Your sugarit lippis and tongues aureate  
    Been to our earis cause of great delite.  
Your angelic mouthis most melifuate

Our rude language has clear illuminate  
 And faire ourgilt our speche, that imperfyte  
 Stude or your goldin pennis shope to write:  
 The Isle before was bare and desolate  
 Of rhetorike or lusty fresh endite.

That is at once an express statement, and a fair example, of the Scottish poet's ideal of his art, his rhetoric; and also an indication of his respect for the poetry of his southern neighbour, the 'auld enemy'. The chief feature, indeed, of Scottish rhetoric, of aureate diction, was the Latinized phraseology, for which Scottish writers have never quite lost a predilection; but these early poets borrowed also syntactical features of the southern tongue. None the less their language remained in its chief traits, pronunciation, vocabulary, idiom, our northern Scottish tongue.

With the migration to London of the Scottish Court in 1603 the process of change began at once and has gone on with ever-increasing rapidity. The Scottish poets of the seventeenth century set themselves, almost as one man, to learn and to write Southern English—Drummond of Hawthornden, a disciple of Spenser and Sidney and of their French and Italian models; Robert Kerr, Earl of Ancram; Sir David Murray of Gorthy (*The Tragicall Death of Sophonisba*, a poem in the metre and manner of *The Rape of Lucrece*); William Lithgow (*The Pilgrimes Farewell to his native country of Scotland*, 1618), Simeon Graham (*The passionate Sparke of a relenting minde*, 1604), Alexander Craig (*Amorose Songs, Sonets and Elegies*, 1606, and *Poeticall Recreations of Alexander Craige, Scoto-Britane*, 1604). Scotticisms abound in such poems, but of the manner of the old Makars the only feature which these poets retain is their fondness for Latinized words:

Thou steepie hill, so circling piramiz'd,  
 That for a prospect serves East Lothian landes,  
 Where ovile flockes doe feed half enamiz'd  
 And for a trophee to North Berwicke standes,  
 So mongst the marine hills growes didemiz'd,  
 Which curling plaines and pastring Vales commaundes:  
 Out from thy poleme eye some sadnesse borrow,  
 And deck thy listes with streames of sliding sorrow.

So Lithgow addresses North Berwick Law, familiar to generations of golfers. One can understand why a century later Thomson of *The Seasons* cultivates the new poetic diction so ardently and writes of 'the plummy race', 'ovarious food', 'th'inspective glass', 'prelusive drops', 'th' amusive arch' (rainbow), &c. Even the Scottish common people love a Latinized diction. A friend's caddy on St. Andrews links, directing his shot, asked: 'Do you see yon castellated mansion?'

These poets wrote in English, but they quite certainly spoke Scots. In fact the anglicization of their work was not infrequently the work of the printer—Vautrollier a Frenchman or Waldegrave an Englishman, or even good Scotsmen like Robert Charteris and Andro Hart. The English is not always pure. To unlearn the use of Scotticisms was a great concern of every writer and teacher till well into the nineteenth century. Sinclair's *Scotticisms* or properly *Observations on the Scottish Dialect* by John Sinclair, Esq., M.P. (later Sir John Sinclair or in Scott's letters 'Sir John Jackass'), 1782, includes 'Scots' itself as a Scotticism for 'Scotch' or 'Scottish', so low had we sunk. Some of the words he lists are still pure Scots, as 'gar', 'sib', 'sicker', 'drumly', but others have either passed into English or never were entirely Scots, e.g. 'restrict', 'sweet-blooded', 'midges', 'a pier', 'suet', 'so soon as', but perhaps these are still Scottish to a purer ear than mine.

The seventeenth century did produce a few poems in the vernacular, the anonymous *Philotas* at the beginning of the century—a survival of the poetic manner of the 'Makars'; *Ane Godlie Dreame*, by Lady Culross; the poems of Alexander Hume 'in a curious blend of the Scots and the English idiom'. The best and best known of these, *Of the Day Estivall* (which is an aureate phrase for *A Summer's Day*), is as delightful for its vivid rendering of the atmosphere of such a day as its decorated Scots is quaint:

The gloming comes, the day is spent,  
The sun goes out of sight,  
And painted is the Occident  
With purpours sanguine bright.

The Skarlett nor the golden threid  
Who would their beauty trie,  
Are naething like the colours reid  
And beautie of the skie.

Our west Horizon circular  
Fra time the sun be set  
Is all with rubies (as it were)  
Or roses reid ou'rfret.

But the poets who wrote Scots as spoken were the Sempils of Beltrees (Sir James but especially Robert) and the anonymous authors of some of our oldest songs, 'Todlen Ben', 'Maggie Lauder', 'The Barrin' o' the Door', 'O waly, waly', &c. These are poems, however, like the earlier *Christ's Kirk* or *Peebles to the Play*, about, or for, the people. The cleavage is already complete—English for serious purposes, Scots for humour or sentiment.

What is true of poetry is also true of prose. 'The literary Scots dialect practically disappears from prose in the seventeenth century', says J. H. Millar. The English Bible is read in the pulpit, rolled doubtless through a Scottish mouth, and commented on in the vernacular. The relation between the two tongues, that which one spoke and that one wrote, is well brought out, as Miss Bald shows, by the fact that Lepreulik prints David Ferguson's *Answer to an Epistle written by Renet Benedict* (1563) in English, but a sermon by the same author (1572) in Scots. 'This proves that English or Anglicized Scots was regarded quite early as the correct diction for academic works, but unadulterated Scots continued to a later period as the usual speech of the preacher facing his congregation'; and so it continued to be for two centuries and more—the speech of the preacher in the pulpit, of the advocate at the bar, of the judge upon the bench, of the people high and low in the intercourse of every day. As late as the closing years of the eighteenth century 'no Englishman could have addressed the Edinburgh populace without making them stare and probably laugh. We looked upon an English boy at the High School as a ludicrous and incomprehensible monster. . . . Still however Scotch is pretty deeply ingrained

into the people, but among the gentry it is receding shockingly. Among families spending £700 or even £500 a year it seems to me that there is a majority of the modern children to whom Burns is a sealed book . . . Scotch has ceased to be the vernacular of the upper classes.' So Lord Cockburn in 1844, who deplores the fact. 'Old Scotland can only live in the character of the people, in its native literature and in its picturesque and delightful language. The gradual disappearance of the Scotch accent and dialect is a national calamity.' One can understand that things have not improved. For most of the students in a university class Burns needs as careful study with a glossary as Chaucer. Things stand much as follows. The people, especially in the country, speak Scots among themselves. In the elementary schools the children speak Scots among themselves, if in the towns a debased Scots. In the secondary public schools, or some of them in the smaller towns, this is also so, and a good English accent may expose one to ridicule. It was so at the Grammar School in Aberdeen twenty years ago, and at King's College, Aberdeen, many spoke Scots. But as one goes up in the social scale, to public schools in Edinburgh, the use of Scots becomes more and more a sign of social inferiority. The highest class socially are careful to send their sons to school and university in England for fear, as Sir Herbert Maxwell states, they should acquire the slightest tincture of the native accent. I have no doubt that during his early years at Aberdeen Byron spoke the local dialect perfectly. He knows the difference between the general Scottish word for 'school', viz. 'Schüle', and the same word *Aberdonice*, 'Squeel'. In later years he was very sensitive to any suggestion of a Scottish flavour in his speech, yet some of his rhymes are Scottish or northern:

then howl your idle wrath  
While she [the Muse] still silvers o'er your gloomy path.

We can recall more than one Scottish student who has gone to Oxford or Cambridge with a definite brogue and has returned without the consonant 'r' and with few distinguish-

able vowels, all replaced with what sounds to a Scottish ear like 'er', 'er'. A few robust souls, like the late Master of Emmanuel, have scorned such flunkeyism and remained as faithful to their native bur, even in speaking southern English, as Professor Barker to that of Lancashire.

What then was the significance of the revival in the eighteenth century of the Scottish vernacular in the poetry of Allan Ramsay, of Robert Fergusson, of quite a galaxy of song-writers, and finally of Burns and those whom he inspired? What of the Scottish novel, Scott and Galt—their pictures of Scottish life and manners and reproduction of Scottish speech? The movement was both a consequence and a symptom of a revival of patriotic feeling, of feeling outraged by the method by which the union of the Parliaments had been achieved, and unassuaged by the economic compensation which materialized slowly. Nor can it be doubted that Burns and Scott, in whom the movement found its fullest expression, did much both to restore national self-confidence and to restore Scotland to a place on the map of Europe. They completed what had been begun by James Macpherson's *Ossian*, emphasized by the work and fame of Hume, Robertson, and Adam Smith, and they gave this revived picture a more native imprint than could be done by the English of Macpherson and Robertson and Hume. But the movement did not restore in any appreciable way the balance as between the two tongues. The cleavage was complete—English for serious compositions on learned themes, Scots for compositions dealing with the life, the sentiments, the humours of the common people. The new poetry and the new novel were to confine the use of Scots to this narrower channel. Not one of the poets but would write in English too, and in the novel the vernacular would be used only for dialogue. Whatever they thought of England politically—and till the French Revolution quickened new passions Burns was a sound British imperialist, Scott was always passionately so—the Scottish writers had as unbounded an admiration for contemporary English writers as had the Makars of the fifteenth century. They admired Pope and Addison and



Sterne and Gray just as Dunbar had revered Gower and Lydgate. No; as Burns's life illustrates, the revival of Scottish national sentiment became a power only as it merged itself in the larger democratic movement of the century. The passions of the Scottish people were gradually roused, not for any restoration of Scottish independence, but for the delivery of Scotland from the domination of the landed Tory party. When the Reform Bill was passed they would be ejected *uno pede*. If Burns became the hero, almost the patron saint, of the Scottish people, the middle classes and the peasantry (not the West End, who have always sniffed a little), it was because they saw in him a combination of two ideals which were gaining in importance and appeal: the inspired poet and the great man of the people.

A Man of the People—'The dignity, the spirit, the indignation of Burns', writes Scott, 'was that of a plebeian—of a high-souled plebeian indeed—of a citizen of Rome or Athens; but still a plebeian, untinged with the slightest shade of that spirit of chivalry which since the feudal times has pervaded the higher ranks of European society.' So justly does Scott distinguish between the spirit of his own work and Burns's: his own aristocratic, in the spirit of the romantic and historical ballads, of the romances, of the courtly poetry of the Middle Ages; Burns's in the spirit of the songs in which the people sang of their own joys and sorrows and loves and hates, and of such old Scottish poems as *Christ's Kirk on the Green* and *Peebles to the Play*. In only one of Burns's songs is the note of chivalry audible:

It was a' for our rightfu' king  
We left fair Scotland's strand,

and it was so unlike a song by Burns that Scott took it for an old song revived and borrowed the stanza and the refrain for a song of his own in *Rokeby*. One of themselves the Scottish people have felt Burns to be both as man and poet—one of the peasantry, that is, for the Industrial Revolution had not yet made of us a nation of artisans. For a glimpse of town life in the Edinburgh of the eighteenth century—dirty,

noisy, convivial, immoral, and pious—one must turn to Ramsay and Fergusson. The background to Burns's poetry is the country-side seen through the eyes of the working peasant. Wordsworth and Angellier have expressed surprise that there is nowhere in Burns's poems a reference to the beautiful view from Mount Oliphant or Mauchline of the sea and the Isle of Arran and Ailsa Craig. Burns was no landscapist, no Gilpin or Wordsworth or even Scott. What filled his vision was the fields in which he worked, the streams and hills, the farms and cottages with, a little farther in the background, the neighbouring villages, Mauchline and Tarbolton, with their kirks and taverns:

O sweet are Coila's haughs and woods  
Where lintwhites chant amang the buds,  
And jinkin hares, in amorous whids,  
Their loves enjoy;  
While through the braes the cushat croods  
With wailfu' cry!

That is one aspect. The other is:

When chapman billies leave the street  
And drouthy neebors neebors meet;  
As market days are wearin' late  
An folk begin to tak the gate:  
While we sit bousing at the nappy  
An' getting fou and unco happy.

Burns is not a Clare, a Shelley born by accident a peasant. He is a peasant who found his inspiration in the life and work, the joys and sorrows, the prejudices and passions of the peasantry, but raised these in his expression of them to a higher power. Burns's temperament was his great gift to poetry, and one which none of his followers has inherited. The glowing eye and the passionate temperament of which it was the index are what Scott recalls in all he has to say of Burns.

What then are the native themes of popular poetry, poetry addressed to and dealing with the common people and their lives? A little reflection, a little study, of Scottish poetry of the kind or of Dutch painting, or better still a little acquaintance with any small peasant or fishing community, will soon

show. It is not work. Of the interest of that the common man is apt to become aware only when he is out of work. It is the onlooker, the philosophic, reflective poet, a Wordsworth or a Tolstoi, who is aware of the beauty, the sublimity, of his stern, wearing, unambitious, regular (as recurrent as the seasons themselves) struggle for a livelihood with the soil or with the sea. He does not reflect on this himself. It is a necessity. The peasantry of Westmorland did not understand Wordsworth. They preferred Hartley Coleridge, who would join them in a glass of beer at the tavern. Nor is it war. The glories of war are the theme of aristocratic poetry, for to the aristocrat goes most of the glory. The chief interests of the peasant are threefold—love in various moods but never with courtly or metaphysical sophistication; revelry (the scenes and incidents in which the Dutch and Flemish painters delighted); and lastly satire. A small community's knowledge of each other is very close, and the satirical mood which close contact breeds finds expression in many ways including nicknames and practical jokes.

Now the great—what I may, following Mr. Dover Wilson, call the 'essential' Burns, is just the poet of these themes. His verse epistles are fresh, ardent, and reflective. The poems in the sentimental tradition of the English poets, Gray, Shenstone, and others, as *The Cottar's Saturday Night*, *To a Mouse*, *To a Mountain Daisy*, are charming. They are the sources of later Scottish sentimental poetry. But the great Burns, the Burns who has had no successor, is the poet of the gaiety of *Halloween*, the rollicking fun of *Tam o' Shanter*, and the combination of fun and satire, fast and furious, of *The Holy Fair*. That poem and *Halloween* are in the tradition of *Christ's Kirk* and *Peebles to the Play*, and also of such a Dutch poem as *Arent Pieter Gysen* by Brederode, and the paintings of the Flemish masters. Has any English poet rendered the zest of life and movement as Burns has in *The Holy Fair*?—

Now butt an' ben the Change-house fills  
 Wi' yill-caup commentators;  
 Here's crying out for bakes an' gills,  
 An' there the pint-stowp clatters;

While thick an' thrang, an' loud an' lang,  
 Wi' Logic an' wi' Scripture,  
 They raise a din that, in the end,  
 Is like to breed a rupture  
                                     O' wrath that day.

As a satirist, a satirist whose satire is at once searching and yet also steeped in laughter, Burns's place is with the greatest. Is there a better piece of satiric verse in the language than *Holy Willy's Prayer*?—

O Thou that in the Heavens dost dwell,  
 Wha, as it pleases best Thysel,  
 Sends ane to Heaven, an' ten to Hell  
                             A' for Thy glory,  
 And no for ony guid or ill  
                             They've done before Thee!

When from my mither's womb I fell  
 Thou might hae plung'd me deep in Hell,  
 To gnash my gooms, and weep and wail  
                             In burning lakes,  
 Whare damnèd devils roar and yell  
                             Chain'd to their stakes.

Yet I am here, a chosen sample,  
 To show Thy grace is great and ample;  
 I'm here a pillar o' Thy temple  
                             Strong as a rock,  
 A guide, a buckler, and example  
                             To a' Thy flock.

But yet, O Lord, confess I must,  
 At times I'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust;  
 And sometimes, too, in warldly trust,  
                             Vile self gets in;  
 But Thou remembers we are dust,  
                             Defil'd wi' sin.

O Lord—yestreen—Thou kens—wi' Meg—  
 Thy pardon I sincerely beg—  
 O may't ne'er be a living plague  
                             To my dishonour!  
 And I'll ne'er lift a lawless leg  
                             Again upon her.

. . . . .

Maybe Thou lets this fleshly thorn  
 Buffet Thy servant e'en and morn,  
 Lest he owre proud and high should turn  
                     That he's sae gifted:  
 If sae, Thy han' maun e'en be borne  
                     Until Thou lift it.

Calvinism as popularly understood—carnality, hypocrisy, unction—all combine in one felicitous stream of wit and poetry.

In his love-songs, too, Burns is pre-eminently the peasant, the plebeian. There is no Petrarchan or Donnean sophistication. Here are just the sentiments of the common country people with their daffings and night-courtings and wholesome blend of sense and heart, passion and affection. The tragic notes are few but piercing. Burns's sadder love-songs are good in parts rather than as a whole. If they had survived, like Sappho's, in single lines or stanzas, posterity might have imagined a greater poet lost:

The pale moon is setting behind the white wave,  
 And time is setting wi' me, O.

or

Had we never loved sae kindly,  
 Had we never loved sae blindly,  
 Never met or never parted  
 We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

The rest of that song, as Scott says, is verbiage. The fact is, the peasant poet can hardly give to the elaboration of his grief the subtlety, metaphysical or decorative or ironical, of the cultured poets as Shakespeare in

Take, O take those lips away  
 That so sweetly were forsworn,

or Rochester or Shelley or Heine, though Heine has no finer stroke of penetrating irony than Burns's

We're a' dry wi' drinkin' o' it,  
 We're a' dry wi' drinkin' o' it,  
 The minister kiss'd the fiddler's wife  
 An' couldna preach for thinkin' o' it.

But where Burns has no superior is in songs of mutual contented love: 'O my luve is like a red, red rose', 'Of a' the airts the wind can blaw', 'Go fetch to me a pint o' wine', the classically perfect

When o'er the hills the eastern star  
Tells buchtin' time is near, my Jo.

In *Tam Glen* he blends humour with real affection, and so in 'Last May a braw wooer cam' down the lang glen'. In one of the most delightful poems written:

In simmer when the hay was mawn  
And corn waved green in ilka field,

Burns has blended lyrically and dramatically the feelings of the 'old struggler' (as the Irishwoman described herself to Scott), the old woman who knows the real, harsh facts of life, and the more reckless spirit of the generous, warm-hearted young girl.

Burns then is the plebeian, the last and greatest of genuinely peasant poets, his work in a tradition that goes back to the fifteenth century in Scottish poetry. But Burns was bilingual, and though the poems he wrote deliberately in English and in the fashionable manner of the day, Odes, &c., are a failure, yet he blends Scots and English in almost all his poems, just as the old Makars had done, and when he wishes to rise to a higher strain of reflection passes in *Tam o' Shanter* from broad Scots to pure English:

But pleasures are like poppies spread, &c.

Sir Walter Scott was also the inheritor and last genuine representative of a tradition in Scottish poetry, not one confined to Scottish poetry, for it is the tradition of medieval romantic and courtly poetry. For him the ballads, romantic and historical, to which Burns preferred the songs and poems of peasant revelry, were his first and great inspiration, and the reason is clear, for scholarship has established the fact that the ballads, like the verse romances, were courtly, aristocratic in origin and spirit.<sup>1</sup> The chivalrous was his passion,

<sup>1</sup> 'The Danish historians are agreed that the ballads were originally and for long, the pastime of the gentry. The Faroe islanders, in their ballad dances, have preserved what was the favourite amusement

though blended with a sober realism due to his Scottish blood and the influence of the great novelists of the eighteenth century and a due regard for his audience. He had no wish like Chatterton, or Morris later, to archaize and so limit his audience. Like Shakespeare, Scott wrote for gain, not glory. In his collective work the tradition of ballad, romance, drama, and prose fiction were combined to produce the genuine historical novel. But with this I am not concerned, only with his poetry and his use of Scots and English.

In all his work Scott is a reviver to some extent of old moods of feeling and old modes of expression, and he is most a poet when this is most true, when there is least of accommodation to the manner of his own day. The essential Scott the poet is to be found, not in the longer lays, but in the songs and fragments scattered through these poems and the novels, and all the best of these are in some older manner. Every one remembers the Lyke-Wake Dirge printed by Ritson and then by Scott:

This ae night, this ae night,  
Every night an' all,  
Fire and sleet, and candle-light,  
And Christ receive thy saul.

That is clearly the inspiration of Meg Merrilies' song:

Wasted, weary, wherefore stay,  
Wrestling thus with earth and clay?  
From the body pass away:—  
Hark, the mass is singing, &c.

and also of Claud Halcro's:

And you shall deal the funeral dole:  
Aye, deal it, mother mine,  
To weary body and to heavy soul,  
The white bread and the wine.

in the old Danish country-houses. This came in first among gentle-folk. The popular features here were not derived from the Danish populace; or, the populace here includes the whole nation.' W. P. Ker, *On the History of the Ballads*.

And you shall deal my horses of pride;  
 Aye, deal them, mother mine;  
 And you shall deal my lands so wide,  
 And deal my castles nine.

But deal not vengeance for the deed,  
 And deal not for the crime;  
 The body to its place, and the soul to Heaven's grace,  
 And the rest in God's own time.

That is old in tone, and yet strangely modern in its suggestion of meaning that is not fully defined. The ballad which Scott puts into the mouth of Old Elspeth in *The Antiquary* is in a purer ballad tradition and style than many of those in the *Minstrelsy*. All the snatches of song put into the mouth of Meg Merrilies are of the same traditional character—a harvest song; a hymn in the manner of Addison and the earlier eighteenth century; a tragic song of love:

Cauld is my bed, Lord Archibald,  
 And sad my sleep o' sorrow;

and the lovely *Proud Maisie*. The same is true of 'Look not thou on beauty charming', or 'Soldier, wake, the day is peeping', or 'Woman's faith and woman's trust, Write the characters in dust', and 'An hour with thee', the last song he wrote. Scott can catch with equal ease the note of a Catholic dirge:

Dust unto dust,  
 To this all must;  
     The tenant has resigned  
 The faded form  
 To waste and worm—  
     Corruption claims her kind.

or that of a Scottish metrical Psalm:

When Israel of the Lord below'd  
 Out from the land of bondage came, &c.

I need not refer to the mottoes he invented, echoes of Elizabethan and later drama. Scott began his literary work as a translator, and he wrote to the end as one who was in a way translating—translating an older world of sentiment and song into a language understood of his contemporaries.



Burns and Scott have had no genuine successors. Each was the last representative of a long line of tradition in life and poetry, if each was also a contributor to the revolution that was in progress. Burns is the last genuine peasant poet, for the peasant life of Scotland was in a process of rapid disintegration. And Burns was also a voice of the new democratic spirit that was quickening in Scotland, the spirit of equalitarianism so much stronger in France and Scotland than in England:

A man's a man for a' that.

Scott was the last poet who took the aristocratic tradition of life and feeling quite seriously, and even he had his doubts, for the aristocracy which Scott loved and to find a place among whom he laboured and dreamed was on the verge of disappearing before the advent of democracy and, still more powerful, of plutocracy. Scott's own life is a strange blend of aristocratic and plutocratic ambitions. Nor did Burns or Scott do anything to re-establish the Scottish vernacular as a medium for serious literature. They are both bilingual and make in different ways effective use of the two. What they did do, however, was to vindicate the claims of Scots to be something more than a vulgar *patois* such as that of the English yokels who insulted Jeanie Deans in a far worse speech than her own at which they laughed. For theirs had never been, as her vernacular had been, the language of cultured men and women, and of both poetry and prose. Neither Burns nor Scott—and Scott's vernacular is purer than Burns's—could have written as they did, could have made Meg Merrilies or Jeanie Deans speak as they do at great moments, in a *patois* that had no history and no literature. But no Scot was prepared to forgo the use of English for work in philosophy, history, economics, any more than at an earlier period they would or could have dispensed with the use of Latin. And so Scottish poetry has continued in the narrow channel prescribed for it, a medium for occasional popular use in such farm-servants' ballads as the late Mr. Gavin Greig collected, and for the poems of cultured writers on similar themes, and the dialogue of novels on Scottish life.

Since the war there has arisen a considerable reaction against this destiny which an older generation was disposed to accept as inevitable, a revolt against the limitation, and against the kind of poetry and fiction which that limitation has led to, the kailyard 'couthy' tradition in verse and prose. The reaction is a symptom of that requickened national feeling after a war that, it had been hoped, would make men less national, better Europeans—a revival which has given a new vogue to Gaelic in Ireland, has put English and the Taal on an equal base in South Africa, and established a similar equality between French and Flemish in Belgium. Ghent is now a definitely Flemish university where all the teaching will be carried on in that language. The problem is a somewhat different one when two languages are as distinct from one another as English and Gaelic or Flemish and French and when the two tongues are merely varieties of the same speech, readily borrowing from one another and with some little effort mutually intelligible. Scots was by those who spoke it known as 'Inglis', English, till the sixteenth century. The Flemings have no desire to differentiate their speech from Dutch. 'Flemish is Dutch', says Professor Geil. The nearest parallel to any revival of Scots is what has happened in Norway. The Norwegians have reasserted their own pronunciation as against the Danish, and have drawn into the Landmal ('King's English') contributions from many different dialects, which is just to some extent what King's English has done naturally and without design. This is what the most intransigent of the younger Scottish poets, Hugh MacDiarmid, has advocated, and I should like to glance at his work with a view to finding the motive inspiring him in his use of language, as it may provide a clue to the likely course of things.

MacDiarmid is a true poet, though a wild one, with more of passion and thought, more fire in his belly, than any of recent Scottish poets, for his passionate temperament is just what Burns could not transmit to his followers, whose work has always been more 'couthy', sentimental and humorous, than impassioned. A wild poet I call him, for to an older man he seems, like many post-war young men, to have parted

from all the older moorings, and not yet to have such a body of support among his own countrymen as to make it easy for him to follow his own course with confidence and joy. He is an angry poet with his hand against every man, even at times his own friends and adherents:

Nae man, nae spiritual force, can live  
In Scotland lang. For God's sake leave it tae  
Mak a warld o' your ain, like me, and if  
'Idiot' or 'lunatic' the Scots folk say,  
At heart ye'll ken o'er well to argue back,  
You'd be better that than lacking a' they lack.

There are two stars by which he would fain steer and have his countrymen follow, a greater and lesser light. The lesser is Scotland a Nation, an independent political unit, and the greater light is Communism, the idea of a classless society set free from the grinding and degrading pursuit of the means to live at the expense of any real life. Major Douglas is one of his prophets. But with all this I have nothing to do except as a brief warning of what one who does not know his poetry may find when he does turn to his often beautiful lyrics, his angry and often pointed satire, his strange metaphysical medleys such as *A Drunk Man looks at the Thistle*, a puzzling blend of satire, sense, insight, nonsense, some of it intelligible nonsense, some of it quite definitely not. He writes, of course, both Scots and English, for to tell the truth some of the best modern Scottish poets, such as the late Ronald Campbell Macfie and Rachel Annand Taylor, have written little or nothing in the Scottish vernacular.

What then are the motives determining McDiarmid's use of Scots, a Scots as puzzling at times to a Scot as to a southerner? They are two, I think, rather contradictory motives; and this applies to the work also of Lewis Spence, another of the experimenters, a fine poet, more fastidious if less passionate than McDiarmid. The one is the desire to get into closer touch with the common people for whom correct English has still the suggestion of a social gap. A candidate for a burghs seat in Parliament was defeated. A friend inquiring about the reasons from a working man got the reply: 'Oh, that accent

and that topcot.' The poor man's correct English and his fur coat had gone against him. The other motive is quite different, and is one which quite definitely does not tend to make their poetry popular in the manner of kail-yard literature. It is the passion for new words, for such experiment in language as is represented in its extremest form in the recent work of Mr. Joyce and others. Addison in his essays on Milton objected to the use by the poet of words sullied by passing through the mouth of the vulgar. The young poets of to-day are more concerned to eschew the use of words or phrases which have passed through the mouths of too many poets and poetasters—Miltonic, Wordsworthian, Keatsian, Tennysonian, Rossettian, Swinburnian echoes. The charm of 'echo' has not for them the appeal it had for Milton, Gray, and Tennyson. Hence the new interest in what one might call naked words, words left to the writer's own private associations; their interest in purely scientific terms, on the one hand, and the flavour of popular, even illiterate, speech on the other; an interest even in the mere sounds and associations of words apart from definable meaning. Now the Scottish poet moved by this impulse finds at his service a language of great wealth, which has been the medium of poetry courtly and popular, and has been spoken by cultured people for centuries, not a local undeveloped *patois* like Yorkshire or Lancashire or Dorsetshire. This, it seems to me, is the justification of Mr. Lewis Spence's experiments in the older Scots of the Makars, and of McDiarmid's claim to be permitted to borrow words from any and every dialect. While the poet is sensitive to the idiom of the tongue he uses as shaped by the practice of living men he is not to be 'cribb'd, cabin'd and confin'd' by this. That was the error to which too strict a classicism tended—Malherbe's doctrine of propriety which ruled out all the bold coinings of a Ronsard, Voltaire's condemnation of the daring hyperboles of Corneille, Condorcet's of Pascal's use of too familiar and proverbial phrases. The great poet is a creator, enriching the resources of the medium he uses.

What is to come of the last effort to save Scots, who can

tell? On the political implications I have no wish to touch. The English language, standard English, as it has taken shape in the mouths of Englishman, Scot, Irishman (unless he goes over to Gaelic), American, Australian has become and will remain the medium of our intercourse in speech and writing. But a Scottish child should not be taught in school that one usage, one pronunciation, is right, another wrong, but that one is Scottish the other English, and the opportunity taken to give him a better knowledge of Scots alongside English. It would not injure, it might even improve, his use of both. To say a thing is wrong is a temptation to a child. To create a social distinction out of speech is pernicious. A young child does not seem to have great difficulty in carrying two languages together without confusion. I have heard a little girl speak Dutch and English. She made mistakes in both, invented words when she did not know them—‘clothsing herself’ for ‘dressing’—but she did not often mix either the vocabularies or the order and construction. Nor will the Scottish poet part too willingly with the bilingualism which has served Scott and others so well. Some of his finest lyrics are in English, and other Scottish poets have written only in English. The two languages have played into each other since the fifteenth century and might do so still with gain.

H. J. C. GRIERSON.

## THE WRECK OF THE DEUTSCHLAND

How all's to one thing wrought.  
The members, how they sit.  
O what a tune the thought  
Must be that fancied it.

(On a piece of music.)

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS,<sup>1</sup> the author of *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, was born in 1844. He was educated at Highgate School and at Balliol College, Oxford, where his deeply religious nature and his rare intellectual gifts were equally manifest. Having taken a double first in Classics, he thought of entering the Church; but before doing so he was received into the Catholic communion by Cardinal Newman. In 1868 he entered the Society of Jesus, and thereafter served intermittently as parish priest in Oxford and Liverpool and as teacher of Classics in the Jesuit colleges of Stonyhurst and St. Beuno. Eventually he was appointed Professor of Classics at the new Royal University in Dublin, where, in 1889, he died suddenly of typhoid fever.

As a boy he had shown extraordinary precocity in two school prize poems, the second of which, *A Vision of Mermaids* (1862),<sup>2</sup> displays an imaginative vigour and a rich sensuousness worthy of Shelley and Keats. At Oxford he had continued to write verse—chiefly devotional poems which testified to his piety, his asceticism, and his deep admiration for George Herbert and the other seventeenth-century religious poets. On becoming a Jesuit, however, Hopkins gave up verse-making as 'foreign to his profession', and even burnt all but a few of his earlier poems. For seven years he wrote nothing but a few 'little presentation pieces' which, as

<sup>1</sup> See *Life of G. M. H.*, by Father Lahey, S.J. (Oxford University Press, 1930).

<sup>2</sup> See *Poems of G. M. H.* (2nd edition), edited by Robert Bridges (Oxford University Press, 1930). The first edition appeared in 1918.

he says, were called for from time to time. The sequel is best told in his own words:

But when in the winter of '75 the *Deutschland* was wrecked in the mouth of the Thames and five Franciscan nuns, exiles from Germany by the Falck Laws, aboard of her were drowned I was affected by the account and happening to say so to my rector he said that he wished some one would write a poem on the subject. On this hint I set to work and, though my hand was out at first, produced one. I had long had haunting my ear a new rhythm which now I realized on paper. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Before beginning my commentary on the poem itself I shall first have something to say about this 'new rhythm', for therein lurks a certain difficulty, the chief obstacle, perhaps, which has hitherto prevented the poem from receiving its due of recognition and praise.

## I

Robert Bridges called the poem a 'great metrical experiment'.<sup>2</sup> That, undoubtedly, it is; but it is the main purpose of this essay to show that the poem is considerably more than an experiment. Bridges was probably more deeply impressed with its essential poetry than his recorded words seem to indicate; but the fact that the poem was distasteful to him 'in both subject and treatment' (he was always repelled by the 'full-blooded Roman theology')<sup>3</sup> prevented him from seeing all its merits, and this attitude of Bridges, together with certain other editorial comments in the standard edition of the poems, is likely for some time yet to create an unfavourable prejudice in many readers.

To Bridges *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, the first and longest of the poems written in Hopkins's individual manner, was nothing less than 'a great dragon folded in the gate to

<sup>1</sup> *Poems of G. M. H.*, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> See his *Memoir of Digby Dolben* (Oxford University Press). Yet the recently published *Letters of G. M. H. to R. B.* (O.U.P.) make it clear that Bridges, having called his friend's experiments in the new rhythm 'presumptuous jugglery' (p. 46), was himself soon to be profoundly influenced by them.

forbid all entrance';<sup>1</sup> and, indeed, most readers would be well advised to make their approach to Hopkins through the comparatively simple anthology pieces, like *Pied Beauty* and *The Starlight Night*. Yet there is no truth in the damaging implication that *The Wreck* is more than legitimately difficult to appreciate as pure poetry. No poem illustrates more remarkably the truth of the statement that it is not what a poem *says* that matters, but what it *is*. Admittedly there are stanzas from which the thought is not easily disentangled. Yet even in these dark places the flower of poetry will still be found blooming—surprising felicities of rhythm, diction, imagery. Moreover, this poet's darkness is worth more than many another poet's daylight. It is, with few exceptions, always the midnight that is charged with the mysteries of veiled luminaries and budding morrows—'splendid obscurities'. Coleridge has said that poetry gives most pleasure when only generally understood; and there are difficult passages in this poem which, by their sheer magic, almost induce us to condone superficial reading. Hopkins himself says, in a letter to Bridges: 'Granted that it needs study and is obscure, for indeed I was not over-desirous that the meaning of all should be quite clear, at least unmistakable, you might . . . have nevertheless read it so that lines and stanzas should be left in the memory and superficial impressions deepened, and have liked some without exhausting all.'<sup>2</sup> Good poetry, however, will always stand the test of intellectual analysis, and in this poem stanzas like Nos. 4 and 27 will yield further delight when the mind has assimilated and organized the more recondite thoughts and images.

To return to the 'new rhythm', this, as it turned out, was not merely a new kind of metre. It included, as we shall see, a new and effective fusion of rhythm and texture. But as the consideration of rhythm as a system of scansion seems to have been uppermost in the poet's mind we will begin with this aspect of the work.

The metre of the poem, which Hopkins calls Sprung

<sup>1</sup> *Poems of G. M. H.*, p. 104.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of G. M. H. to R. B.*, p. 50.



Rhythm,<sup>1</sup> is virtually a stress-metre derived from two main sources—the ‘irregular’ choruses of Milton’s *Samson Agonistes* and the free rhythms of popular jingles and nursery rhymes. It is also closely akin to the rhythms of ordinary speech. Hopkins was the first to discover that the choruses in *Samson Agonistes*, so far from being capriciously irregular, were built up on a carefully calculated system of ‘counterpoint’, or reversed feet.<sup>2</sup> Here he saw the possibility of development, and the direction of this development was determined by the freedom and vigour of such a popular cadence as ‘*Díng, dóng, béli, Pússy’s ín the wéll; Who put her ín? &c.*’ This he calls a simple form of Sprung Rhythm; and the essence of Sprung Rhythm is that ‘one stress makes one foot, no matter how many or how few the syllables. . . . I should add that the word “Sprung” means something like abrupt and applies only by rights where one stress follows another running, without syllable between.’<sup>3</sup> Thus from the healthy fusion of a highly artificial choral metre and a spontaneous popular rhythm arose the bold and varied Sprung Rhythm of *The Wreck of the Deutschland*—a rhythm based on ‘a better and more natural principle than the ordinary system, much more flexible and capable of much greater effects’.<sup>4</sup> In a letter to Bridges he says:

Why do I employ sprung rhythm at all? Because it is the nearest to the rhythm of prose, that is the native and natural rhythm of speech, the least forced, the most rhetorical and emphatic of all possible rhythms, combining, as it seems to me, markedness of rhythm—that is rhythm’s self—and naturalness of expression—for why, if it is forcible in prose to say ‘lashed: rod’ am I obliged to weaken this in verse, which ought to be something stronger, not weaker, into ‘lashed birch-rod’ or something?<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the poet’s own account of his rhythms see *Poems of G. M. H.* (Preface) and also three letters to R. W. Dixon—Nos. III, V, and XIII of *Correspondence of G. M. H. and R. W. D.* (Oxford University Press).

<sup>2</sup> See *Milton’s Prosody*, by Robert Bridges (Clarendon Press), p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> *Correspondence of G. M. H. and R. W. D.*, p. 23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14 and 15.

<sup>5</sup> *Letters of G. M. H. to R. B.*, p. 46.



... is what I above all aim at in poetry.<sup>1</sup> This pattern he achieves by building up a seemingly precious yet entirely organic system of tone-values. Alliteration, assonance, partial assonance, interior rhyme, half-rhyme, and subtle vocalic 'scales'<sup>2</sup> are all employed not merely as ornamental devices but as definite structural modes in the making of a complex expressional rhythm. Their employment is not regular and monotonous as it would be if determined by a prearranged and inviolable tone-pattern. Alliteration in Hopkins, for instance, is used with far greater imaginative purpose than in either Langland or Swinburne. In *The Wreck*, alliteration and other phonal correspondences are used in conjunction with a free, creative handling of syntax as a means of giving emphasis to the rhythm—intensity, colour, and precision to the diction. The unit of variation is the 'musical phrase' rather than the line or stanza, and the result is a unique poetic design, a verbal tapestry of brilliant texture.

We may now illustrate the poet's preoccupation with expressional rhythm by quoting in full the first stanza in Part the Second:

Some find me a sword; some  
 The flange and the rail; flame  
 Fang, or flood' goes Death on drum,  
 And storms bugle his fame.  
 But we dream we are rooted in earth—Dust!  
 Flesh falls within sight of us, we, though our flower the same,  
 Wave with the meadow, forget that there must  
 The sour scythe cringe, and the bleak share come.

The powerful, cumulative effect is produced by the judicious placing of pauses and alliterative consonants (flange, fang, flood; death, drum). Great emphasis is given to 'Some' at

<sup>1</sup> *Poems*, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> '... certain chimes', as he says, 'suggested by the Welsh poetry I had been reading (what they call *cynghanedd*).' *Correspondence of G. M. H. and R. W. D.*, p. 15.

the end of line 1 and 'flame' in line 2 by means of the pause, or silent syllable, before each. What a pregnant statement is 'Dust!' at the end of line 5! How apt is the alliterative link with 'dream!'<sup>1</sup>

Again, in stanza 18, having told us how the brave nun rose like a prophetess above the tumult of the wreck, the poet breaks out with

Ah, touched in your bower of bone  
Are you! turned for an exquisite smart  
Have you! make words break from me here all alone  
Do you!—mother of being in me, heart.

No rhythmic device could be more natural than the overflow in these lines. As with a sob, each line stumbles and falters over the threshold of the next. Each line borrows just two syllables of the next, and the regularity of this encroachment sets up a vertical cross-current of pure expressional rhythm without disturbing the basic metre.

Now contrast the agitation of the above passage with the restrained rhythm of the following:

Jésu, heart's light,  
Jésu, maid's son,  
What was the feast followed the night  
Thou hadst glory of this nun?—<sup>2</sup>

Such hushed and reverential invocations should indeed be so retarded. So, too, even grammar should yield to more important considerations, and the expulsion of the relative pronoun after 'feast' (Hopkins had no use for the colourless, otiose word) definitely improves the cadence.

<sup>1</sup> For a sensitive examination and analysis of the texture of the poem (especially of the magnificent opening stanza) see the chapter on G. M. H. in Edith Sitwell's *Aspects of Modern Poetry* (Duckworth), p. 59 et seq. Mr. F. R. Leavis also is illuminating on the technique of stanzas 7 and 8 (*New Bearings in English Poetry*, Chatto & Windus, pp. 176-8).

<sup>2</sup> Stanza 30.

A further device for varying the rhythm is the use of tri-syllabic run-on rhymes in the very next stanza (No. 31).<sup>1</sup>

Well, she has thee for the pain, for the  
 Patience; but pity of the rest of them.  
 Heart, go bleed at a bitterer vein for the  
 Comfortless unconfessed of them—

These rhymes are not mere factitious ornament. The poet, wishing to dispense with the final pause, uses them as a substitute to mark the metrical divisions; so that in reading, while we are primarily conscious of the speech-rhythm, we are conscious also of the metre.

Lastly, the variety of rhythmic resources in this poem is no less apparent in the six-stress lines which terminate the stanzas. A typical or 'average' line would be that in stanza 6:

And here the faithful waver, the faithless fable and miss.

But for the rest of these 'alexandrines', no two are metrically identical, and in rhythmic flexibility they show an extraordinary range. In a line like

To flash from the flame to the flame then, tower from the grace  
 to the grace<sup>2</sup>

we have a typical loping Swinburnian movement (with what seems also to be a share of that poet's peculiar vagueness); but this precise effect is never repeated. The poem is perhaps unique in the way it gives us a spice of one poet here and a flavour of some other poet there, yet never degenerates into pastiche. Never for a moment does it lose its own individuality.

## II

Having, as I hope, considerably reduced the difficulty of approach, we may now proceed to an examination of the content of the poem.

The argument falls conveniently into four sections or movements, which may be briefly summarized as follows: (1) Meditation on the mystery of God's infinite power as con-

<sup>1</sup> 'she' is the nun; 'thee' is Christ.

<sup>2</sup> Stanza 3.

trusted with Man's creeping subservience; dissolution of the physical life counteracted by the gift of grace through Christ; the mystic 'stress' exerted on the human soul by *Natura Benigna* and *Natura Maligna*; this sensitivity to divine admonition attributed to the Crucifixion, with which the present disaster is implicitly identified; invocation to God to master his rebellious creature either by slow intuitive, or sudden and violent apocalypse (stanzas 1-10). (2) Dramatic description of the wreck and attendant circumstances (stanzas 11-17). (3) The behaviour of the heroic nun; tentative analysis of her motives; her act ultimately attributed to prophetic inspiration and the faith which creates faith (stanzas 18-31). (4) Return to the theme of the Proem: reconciliation to God's Will; faith in a benign if inscrutable Purpose heightened to a triumphant hymn of adoration; Assumption of the nun as a second Virgin; plea for intercession on behalf of English heretics (stanzas 32-5).

As an impassioned, subjective treatment of an ostensibly objective theme *The Wreck of the Deutschland* may in some ways be compared to Donne's *Anniversaries*. In each work an external event supplies the initial inspiration, the *motif* and the broad framework of circumstance, while the poet's own religious fervour, mysticism, or (if you will) poetic 'numinosity', supply the emotional tone and the more profound thoughts and images. In each poem it is this imaginative fusion of the impersonal with the personal, the accidental with the fundamental, the particular with the universal, which gives the intellectual content a piquancy only equalled by the sustained beauty of the verbal incantation.

Part the First describes with great poignancy the feelings and thoughts of a deeply religious man after he has recovered from the first shock of a disaster in which the good and the brave have suffered and perished. In the opening invocation to God, 'Lord of living and dead', bountiful in creation yet stern and terrible in mastering his rebellious creature, Man, we are made to feel that the poet's first emotions were painful and disturbing; we perceive that there has been a mental struggle, in which the problem of evil and the Christian

doctrine of Divine Love and Omnipotence have been with difficulty<sup>1</sup> reconciled by reason and faith. The problem of evil, which has rightly been called 'the great theoretical difficulty for a religious view of the world', may with equal justice be accepted as 'a necessary factor in the emergence of the religious attitude';<sup>2</sup> and with this paradox the mind of Hopkins was always deeply engaged. But whatever may have been the precise nature of the first mental conflict, it is certain that he had attained the tranquillity of faith before he began the poem. His Catholic theology (like the earlier Platonism) conceived God as the All-Good, who, as such, could not be held directly responsible for evil; but whereas the Platonist explained disaster as being the work of Necessity (that seeming power of resistance in the material world which prevents the perfect representation of the Divine Thought), the Schoolmen accepted it as a mystery, a negative attribute of the good, a force without which the various forms of moral virtue could not flourish. This might not be 'the best of all possible worlds', but it was the one which God, for his own good reasons, had chosen to create.

One is reminded of Shelley's powerful rendering of the Platonic conception:

... the One Spirit's plastic stress  
Sweeps through the dull dense world . . .  
Torturing th'unwilling dross that checks its flight  
To its own likeness . . . (*Adonais*, 381-4).

—words which Hopkins may have remembered, for, without participating in Shelley's pantheism, he uses the word 'stress' in a similar sense many times in *The Wreck* and elsewhere. Indeed, a sound and satisfying reading of the more abstract passages in the poem depends largely upon the accuracy with

<sup>1</sup> Many (probably most) of Hopkins's co-religionists would deny this 'difficulty'. Yet I base my opinion on the internal evidence of the poem: such plangent apostrophe, stark confession, passionate and complete surrender would surely have been impossible without some previous conflict. Compare also the evidence of *The Loss of the Eurydice* and Sonnet No. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *The Idea of God: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion* (W. R. Matthews).

which we interpret certain words and phrases that are used in a specific or somewhat arbitrary sense—arbitrary, that is, in respect of current usage, but in their application always harking back to their origins. 'Stress' is such a word; 'horror of height', 'laced', 'spell', 'grace', 'pressure', and 'principle' are others, all occurring in the first four stanzas.

The first five stanzas, then, are the most intensely subjective in treatment. As one critic has finely and tersely expressed it, the wreck that Hopkins describes 'is both occasion and symbol. He realizes it so vividly that he is in it; and it is at the same time in him.'<sup>1</sup>

I did say yes  
O at lightning and lashed rod;  
Thou heardst me truer than tongue confess  
Thy terror, O Christ, O God;<sup>2</sup>

That perhaps may be taken as sympathetic participation in the 'occasion'—the terrors of the storm; yet the 'lightning and lashed rod', together with the undeniably personal nature of the confession which follows, would seem to indicate that the poet's mind was possessed rather by a poignant phase in the evolution of his own soul:

Thou knowest the walls, altar and hour and night:  
The swoon of a heart that the sweep and the hurl of thee trod  
Hard down with a horror of height;<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps it was an occasion in the early stages of his novitiate; perhaps a later period of 'desolation': certainly an experience not unlike that of Francis Thompson in *The Hound of Heaven*. These images of physical terror are the symbols of the spiritual storm—the cataclysm in which every argument and lust of the physical being was finally (as he thought) submerged. The last bristling resistance of his mortal nature was trodden 'hard down' with the horror incident to a full realization of Man's subservience in relation to God's incalculable range and altitude. The phrase 'horror of height' could refer only to some such state of authentic quasi-mystical perception. We are at first reminded of Francis Thompson's

<sup>1</sup> F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry*, p. 176 (Chatto & Windus).

<sup>2</sup> Stanza 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



*Dread of Height*, but there is no real resemblance. Thompson's dread is a kind of spiritual vertigo induced by an almost sensual indulgence in the golden love-feasts of the high banquet-hall, and the consequent fear

Lest like a weary girl I fall  
From clasping love so high.

But the emotions of Hopkins are no such indulgence. The sensation of being a languid Gulliver in the hands of a divine Brobdingnagian of unknown intentions is one in which many mystics have luxuriated. Hopkins, however, never ceased to be a rational man. He may almost be said to struggle with the Holy Ghost as with an incubus: the pangs of surrender are physical no less than spiritual; his midriff is astrain, his whole being is laced with the terrific 'stress' of Pentecostal fire.<sup>1</sup> His pursuit and capture were more like a paralysing nightmare than Thompson's; for whereas the latter

. . . was sore adread

Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside,  
Hopkins seems to have had no alternative but complete destruction:

The frown of his face  
Before me, the hurtle of hell  
Behind, where, where was a, where was a place?

Incidentally, with what success do the repetitions in this last line convey the sensation of panic—the last effort, perhaps,

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare this stanza with the sonnet *Carrion Comfort* (No. 40), written approximately ten years later. The images of physical assault are repeated: the victim feels the same desire to escape, this time from Despair:

O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me  
Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb against me? . . .  
. . . me frantic to avoid thee and flee?

The whole sestet might, indeed, refer to the same occasion as that described so cryptically in *The Wreck*. Christ (or God) is the 'hero' whose 'heaven-handling' flung him down, trod on him. In the last lines the identity of Despair is explicit:

That night, that year  
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my  
God.

of the 'unwilling dross' in Hopkins to escape from God's 'plastic stress'. Then, to show how the soul's surrender to God is paradoxically its only means of deliverance:

I whirled out wings that spell<sup>1</sup>  
And fled with a fling of the heart to the heart of the Host.

By an apt image the heart is compared to a homing pigeon:

My heart, but you were dove-winged, I can tell,  
Carrier-witted, I am bold to boast,  
To flash from the flame to the flame then, tower from the grace  
to the grace.

The unusually evocative quality of the diction throughout the poem is well illustrated in this stanza (No. 3). In the case of words like 'spell' and 'Host' the supra-logical connotations and accidental associations reinforce the literal meaning. This evocativeness makes itself felt not only in passages where the imagery is clear-cut and precise, but also in places where the total effect is vague and somewhat blurred, as in the last line of this same stanza. Some knowledge of the theological conception of grace is perhaps necessary for a proper understanding of the last image; yet the mind open to suggestion will probably respond without recourse to St. Teresa or St. John of the Cross. If we allot the first flame to retributive lightning the second may well be the symbol of the Holy Ghost; and once the soul is delivered from the fear of imminent destruction it may well 'tower', like Shakespeare's falcon, to its 'pride of place', that exalted state of mystic contemplation whence evils and temptations become easy prey. A greater precision in expressing these theological concepts would have added nothing to the poetic vigour of

<sup>1</sup> The word 'spell' in this context is a characteristic instance of Hopkins's disregard for the temporary inconvenience caused to his reader by seemingly wanton ambiguities. At first we are not sure whether 'spell' is verb or noun, or whether 'that' is relative pronoun or demonstrative adjective. But on a second reading it becomes clear that only the latter functions supply the required sense, 'spell' then signifying one of a series of short periods of arduous pain or labour; and 'that spell' was obviously the last of the series—the crisis. See also stanza 4, where 'proffer' is a noun; 'riding a river' in stanza 6; 'O unteachably after evil' (stanza 18), where 'after' has verbal force.

the line; indeed, a certain vagueness is inseparable from all attempts to describe the ineffable experiences of mysticism.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, in Hopkins we have always to reckon with the powerful urgency of the rhythm, which is a definite stimulus to imaginative effort.

Nothing but such a 'majestic instancy' would ever carry the average reader through the many superficial difficulties of the next stanza (No. 4), with its swift transition from one metaphysical<sup>2</sup> image to another:

I am soft sift  
In an hour-glass—at the wall  
Fast, but mined with a motion, a drift,  
And it crowds and it combs to the fall;

Consideration of the mystic way of spiritual salvation has led naturally to this reflection on the steady dissolution of the physical life. The rhythmic felicity of this quatrain is noticeable even in the manner of the indenting. The slight uncertainty in the metre of the second line is fitting; and as we gradually become aware that the sand is dropping away down the centre, how the rhythm gathers up speed and a fateful regularity! Then comes a change of metaphor:

I steady as a water in a well, to a poise, to a pane,  
But roped with, always, all the way down from the tall  
Fells or flanks of the voel, a vein  
Of the gospel proffer, a pressure, a principle, Christ's gift.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wicksteed (*Dante and Aquinas*, p. 40): 'Unless the mystic speaks in consciously inadequate symbols, he finds that every phrase he utters recognizes restrictions and implies limitations which his sense of the infinite has transcended and rejected.'

<sup>2</sup> I use 'metaphysical' not in the Johnsonian sense of 'conceited', but as implying a certain refinement and complexity of thought—a kind of ecstasy of intellectual parturition as we find it in Shakespeare and Donne. A new emotion seems to be generated by the mental process itself. Moreover, the purely philosophical connotation of 'metaphysical' is relevant here.

<sup>3</sup> The first image may have been suggested to Hopkins by the well in the grounds of St. Beuno's College, N. Wales, where the poem was written. The Editor gives a note on the Welsh word 'voel' (bare hill): 'The Voel is a mountain not far from St. Beuno's.'

He also says: 'The meaning, obscured by roped, is that the well is fed by the trickles of water within the flanks of the mountain.'

The hour-glass, small homely object—apt symbol of the less important physical being—is suddenly abandoned in favour of larger symbols which express the simultaneous recovery and reinforcement of the essential spiritual life: yet there is just enough resemblance between the forms and movements of the two sets of objects to allow the subjective thought to jump, like an electric current, from one to the other. The dichotomy of being, from the religious point of view, has never been more tersely or more poignantly expressed.

Having dealt with the ritualistic and theological modes of revelation, the poet proceeds, in stanza 5, to express that mystical illumination which is due to direct contact with the beauty and mystery of Nature:

I kiss my hand  
To the stars, lovely-asunder  
Starlight, wafting him out of it; and  
Glow, glory in thunder;

Once more the audible rhythm and the mental images are perfectly assimilated. The metre allows the utmost liberty to the speech-rhythm without loss of compactness. The overflow from 'lovely-asunder' to 'starlight' imparts an *élan*; the pause before (and after) 'and' in the final clause fittingly ushers in the more solemn and sonorous thought. But at line 7 we come upon two characteristic but cryptic words:

Since though he is under the world's splendour and wonder,  
His mystery must be *instressed*, *stressed*;

'Instressed' is, of course, an intensive form of the *leit motif*, 'stress'. This word usually conveys the idea of supernatural overmastering influence accompanied by a sudden inrush of revelation: it seems, indeed, to express the concept of Bonaventura and Anselm, that all perfect knowledge is dependent upon an illumination.<sup>1</sup>

For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand.

<sup>1</sup> The second stanza in the fragment, No. 73, might almost have been written to elucidate the passage we are considering:

What I know of thee I bless  
As acknowledging thy stress  
On my being, and as seeing  
Something of thy holiness.

The repetition of 'stressed' after the stronger and more precise 'instressed' is at first puzzling; but it is not, I think, mere expletive. If 'instressed' (to put it crudely) signifies 'driven home', the other word conveys a general idea of emphasis, as though the poet is putting all the weight of personal experience behind his assertion. Bridges condemned the whole line as 'unpoetic'—an effort to force emotion into a theological channel. Not all readers will agree with him. Two words do not spoil a mellifluous stanza, and the numinous emotion is so general as to place it outside theology altogether. In any case, 'force' is not a happy word to apply to feelings so obviously spontaneous and sincere as those of Hopkins.

The same applies to the next two stanzas (6 and 7), which are in some ways the most difficult in the whole poem. They embody, as Father Lahey tells us, certain ideas derived from Scotist theology; yet a course of Scotus is not indispensable for their elucidation. In stanza 5 the poet has said that Man's reactions to the beauty and variety of Nature produce an intuition of the divine goodness and power; but he proceeds to qualify this by adding that the deeper significance of God's purpose, the awful mystery of His being, is not always revealed easily and continuously in this way: it is often brought home to us with a certain stunning violence, like the dint of a hammer on white-hot iron:

With an anvil-ding  
And with fire in him forge thy will.<sup>1</sup>

This rare emotional stress, mystical illumination, is brought about not by mere disaster, mere horror, but rather by those contingencies wherein the intensity of human suffering is heightened by and contrasted with the innocence and fortitude of the victims.<sup>2</sup> In the case of the *Deutschland*, the poet is shaken with horror and admiration—suppressed, bewildered resentment against the Power which could permit such apparent injustice, and gratitude to that same Power

<sup>1</sup> Stanza 10.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the conversion of Saul following the stoning of Stephen: hence the allusion in Stanza 10. Stanza 6 also speaks of the stress

'That guilt is hushed by, hearts are flushed by and melt—'

for the noble virtues evoked. Hence he instinctively relates the victim's experience to that of Christ. Like the theologian, he is unable to explain contingent evil on purely rational grounds;<sup>1</sup> he therefore follows the 'list' of his emotions, and recovers his mental equilibrium by adopting the faith that God's purpose in Man can be fulfilled only by a continuous process of suffering and redemption. Is it not natural, then, that 'here the faithful (that is, *some* of the faithful) waver', and that the 'faithless' who, in spite of Plato, seek to explain ultimate realities by ratiocination only, should

... fable and miss?

This supernatural stress, therefore, is a truth<sup>o</sup> that predominates, 'rides time like riding a river', floats buoyantly on the stream that bears all other truths away, and derives ultimately from Christ's Passion and the bitter-sweet sensations engendered by that apocalypse. Such profound emotions had been 'felt before' (witness the death of Socrates), but Christ's Passion was the culmination, the 'discharge' into the world of a new ethic—the concept that self-sacrifice is the fundamental principle of perfection.

At this point Hopkins identifies the external drama of events with the internal drama of his own mental and emotional states. This he does not explicitly, but by a tacit, almost unconscious allusion to a certain important resemblance between Christ, the five nuns, and himself—I mean the fact that they had all dedicated their lives to the service of others—a vocation fraught with hardship, danger, and disappointment. The more explicit statement is in stanza 22:

Five! the finding and sake  
And cipher of suffering Christ.  
Mark, the mark is of man's make  
And the word of it Sacrificed.

This, in turn, leads on to the contemplation of a similar sacrifice in St. Francis:

Joy fall to thee, father Francis,  
Drawn to the Life that died;

<sup>1</sup> Neither Aquinas nor Scotus could do this to the satisfaction of non-scholastic philosophers.

Again, in stanza 27, we have what is ostensibly a conjecture concerning the facts of the 'tall' nun's life—facts which would explain her call to Christ to 'come quickly':

No, but it was not these.  
The jading and jar of the cart,  
Time's tasking, it is fathers that asking for ease  
Of the sodden-with-its-sorrowing heart.<sup>1</sup>

Yet at the same time we are reminded of other instances of the same divine despair—Christ's lamentation over Jerusalem, his last cry: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and also of Hopkins's own agonized utterances in the last sonnets.

The above exegesis of the more obscure implications of stanza 6 has been carried out, I believe, in the light of common knowledge and common sense. Another reader without either Thomist or Scotist theology might have interpreted the lines as follows: 'The stroke of calamity is not dealt by God in wantonness; neither is it His pleasure that Man should suffer gratuitously. God's direct influence is felt only through the benign aspects of Nature: the malign aspects, the seemingly malicious scourging of Man by "stars and storms", all forms of misadventure which strike the guilty into appalled silence and flush all sympathetic hearts with almost insupportable pity—these are not directly the work of God.' It is highly improbable that Hopkins attached any philosophic importance to that aspect of the Platonic 'Necessity' which postulates a stubborn resistance to God's power in the material world; but he must have believed that human malignity prevented the smooth working out of the Divine Will. He throws out a far from ambiguous hint that human error and cruelty, if not absolutely the *cause* of the *Deutschland* disaster,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sonnet No. 50:

... why must  
Disappointment all I endeavour end?

According to Bridges, Hopkins 'was not considered a success in his profession'. See Biographical Note in Miles's *Poets of the Century* (1905).

at least stand terribly rebuked by it. How else are we to interpret the words

Nor first from heaven (and few know this)  
Swings the stroke dealt—<sup>1</sup>

and

Wring thy rebel, dogged in den,  
Man's malice, with wrecking and storm . . .<sup>2</sup>

and the final plea, in stanza 10:

Make mercy in all of us . . . ?

Was not Saul made merciful after his sudden conversion? Perhaps one may suggest, without irreverence, that above the tumult of the sinking *Deutschland* the poet hears the voice of God: 'Falck, Falck, why persecutest thou me?'

Against this reading, however, we have to consider the significance of certain words in stanza 21:

. . . but thou art above, thou Orion of light;  
Thy unchancelling poisoning palms were weighing the worth,  
Thou martyr-master:

So God was, after all, the Prime Mover; he was the Hunter, who beat these nuns from their monastic covert in Germany so that their faith and fortitude might be tested by ordeal and death. The poet accepts the scourge of heaven with complete faith in ultimate beatitude—'the heaven-haven of the Reward':

He was to cure the extremity where he had cast her;  
Do, deal, lord it with living and dead;<sup>3</sup>

We see then that the storm is 'both occasion and symbol' inasmuch as it excites and finally subdues the inner conflict. It subdues the conflict because it brings conviction of supernatural control; yet it is only the sensitive heart of the potential martyr ('hard at bay', stabbed awake, 'trodden hard down with the sweep and hurl of God's dark descending') which feels the divine stress and can utter spontaneously the cry of the stricken Saul: 'Who art thou, Lord?' and 'What wilt thou have me to do?' In stanza 8 this point is enforced by the elaborate yet perfectly apt image of the

<sup>1</sup> Stanza 6.

<sup>2</sup> Stanza 9.

<sup>3</sup> Stanza 28.



'lush-kept, plush-capped sloe', which bursts in the mouth and flushes the whole being with its 'sour or sweet' (or both!) nectar. Early or late (and there is a special grace or authenticity in a late conversion), men come to acknowledge the divinity of Christ: either 'first', by a subjective realization of the divine principle underlying 'the world's splendour and wonder'; or 'last', in extremity, having been driven into acquiescence, forced to crouch before the thunder-throne. But Hopkins would rather all men should yield readily to the gentler, more sensuous persuasion:

Or rather, rather than stealing as Spring  
Through him, melt him but master him still.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem by this last line, however, that he regards both experiences, the 'sweet' and the 'bitter', as essential to the true poise and discipline of the human soul; for he is constantly reiterating the paradox of God's simultaneous exercise of mastery and mercy, austerity and love:<sup>2</sup>

Father and fondler of heart thou hast wrung:  
Hast thy dark descending, and most art merciful then.<sup>3</sup>

### III

Part the Second of our poem plunges quickly into the description of the actual wreck. The poet follows closely the contemporary newspaper accounts of the disaster, in some places, indeed, with almost word for word fidelity. Yet the style never lapses into the prosaic, and the combined ideality and realism of the word-painting is hardly to be matched in English Literature. The style varies from the almost (though not quite) colloquial ease of the beginning:

On Saturday sailed from Bremen,  
American-outward-bound,  
Take settlers and seamen, tell men with women,  
Two hundred souls in the round—<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the sonnet called *Spring* (No. 9).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the lesson of the Book of Job.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the close of No. 16 (*In the Valley of the Elwy*):

Complete thy creature dear O where it fails,  
Being mighty a master, being a father and fond.

<sup>4</sup> Stanza 12.

to the elaborate, 'stylized' manner of

Wiry and white-fiery the whirlwind-swivellèd snow  
Spins to the widow-making unchilding unfathering deeps.<sup>1</sup>

Between these extremes we have a passage in which the words arrange themselves naturally in the non-logical, inverted order of rapid, excited speech—a device which recalls the spontaneous vigour of the old ballad or folk-song:

Into the snow she sweeps  
Hurling the haven behind,  
The Deutschland on Sunday . . .

Sitting Eastnortheast, in cursed quarter, the wind.

An even greater excitement, an almost hysterical breathlessness of dramatic narration is achieved in stanza 28, where the frantic efforts of the drowning to save themselves, and the poet's attempt to evoke and express the vision of the nun, are merged in a striking aposiopesis:

But how shall I . . . make me room there:  
Reach me a . . . Fancy, come faster—  
Strike you the sight of it? look at it loom there,  
Thing that she . . . there then! the Master;<sup>2</sup>

All this, however, falls easily within the bounds of poetic tradition. But I know of no precedent for the following passage, in which, by means of a more than Shakespearian ellipsis, the terror and confusion of that 'unshapeable shock night' are represented, with what literally approaches the speed of thought, in a series of cinematographic 'shots':

They fought with God's cold—  
And they could not and fell to the deck  
(Crushed them) or water (and drowned them) or rolled  
With the sea-romp over the wreck.<sup>3</sup>

One of the greatest merits of this poem is the effective use

<sup>1</sup> Stanza 13.

<sup>2</sup> The poet was quick to perceive the analogy of Simon Peter, who saw Christ walking on the water; hence, probably, the allusion to the apostle in the next stanza (29).

<sup>3</sup> Stanza 17. It is difficult to do justice to the power and fitness of these lines—the dash of waves, the physical agony, the brute callousness of Nature that both rhythm and diction suggest.

of contrast. We have already considered the varieties of rhythm employed; but this variety extends also to visual and intellectual conceptions. Vivid and moving as it is, the description of the wreck is not overdone; the agony is not drawn out, but is relieved by brief flashes of passionate but always optimistic reflection on the spiritual issues involved. One example is stanza 18, the beginning of which I have already quoted; and in stanza 21, after having recorded the malignity of Nature—

Surf, snow, river and earth  
Gnashed . . .

the poet derives consolation from his faith in God's hidden purpose, and in the last line gives his emotion a tender, symbolic utterance in images which recall the sincere decorative manner of a Veneto,<sup>1</sup> a Mantegna, or a Botticelli:

Storm-flakes were scroll-leaved flowers, lily-showers—sweet  
heaven was astrew in them.

In the next two stanzas (22 and 23) we have an amazing 'metaphysical' digression—a musical fantasy, like a piece of elaborate ornamentation by Mozart, on the fortuitously mystical theme of Five. I say 'fortuitously', because if there had been only *four* nuns to lament, or if they had chanced to be Benedictines instead of Franciscans, the charm could not have been wound up. Yet can we blame the poet for making the most of his opportunities? So super-heated by passion is the furnace of his mind that he can take this apparently pinchbeck material, melt it down, and then reforge it into images of pure gold. The secret of this Midas-touch lies in the imaginative power and suggestiveness of the poet's diction, which in these two stanzas (as, indeed, everywhere) will repay the closest scrutiny. But although this kind of virtuosity will never appeal to all types of reader, there are and always will be many who will find in it a delicacy, a pathos, and a unifying harmony which more than justify the means employed. Neither Donne nor Crashaw has shown greater

<sup>1</sup> His *St. Catherine*, in particular.

skill in that intellectual alchemy which transmutes the factitious into the fundamental.

A last example of effective contrast is the pure 'skyscape' painting of stanza 26—the concrete image which symbolizes the joys of Paradise:

For how to the heart's cheering  
The down-dugged ground-hugged grey  
Hovers off, the jay-blue heavens appearing  
Of pied and pealed May.  
Blue-beating and hoary-glow height, or night, still higher,  
With belled fire and the moth-soft Milky Way,<sup>1</sup>

Here as always we note the unexpected words. There is one epithet only, 'pied', which might have been used by some earlier writer; yet all the rest are completely justified by their truth and beauty.

The last section of the poem (stanzas 31 to 35) deals with the poet's final reconciliation to the ways of God. Hopkins believed that the nun's heroic mien brought comfort and faith to the last moments of the doomed voyagers:

... lovely-felicitous Providence  
... is the shipwrack then a harvest ... ?

God's sovereignty he 'admires', and is grateful for His mercy. He regards the nun as a type of martyr and her vision of Christ as a second mystic advent:

But here was heart-throe, birth of a brain,  
for

Not a doomsday dazzle in his coming, nor dark as he came;  
Kind, but royally reclaiming his own;

All of which makes it difficult to agree absolutely with Mr. Herbert Read,<sup>2</sup> who recently expressed the opinion that *The Wreck of the Deutschland* is a poem 'of contrition, fear, and submission, rather than of the love of God'. It is true that all these elements are present, although the 'contrition' is

<sup>1</sup> 'Moth-soft' anticipates both the 'moth-like stars' of W. B. Yeats and the 'mothy and warm' evening of Hardy's *Afterthought*.

<sup>2</sup> In *New Verse*, No. 1, 1933.

vicarious rather than personal, and the 'fear' is not incompatible with the love of God: yet there seems to be a flouting of evidence in the implication that this love of God, which the Catholic faith enjoins, is absent from the poem.

Beyond saying sweet, past telling of tongue . . .  
and

. . . but be adored, but be adored King.

are surely not insincere and empty catchwords. Admittedly the first ten stanzas foreshadow the inner conflict and gloom of the last 'terrible' sonnets; and Canon Dixon found in the poem 'elements of deep distress' which made him read it with 'less excited delight' than that with which he read the other poems. But the phrases 'terrible pathos' and 'terrible crystal' which Dixon<sup>1</sup> so aptly applied to Hopkins's poems (and which Mr. Read quotes with special reference to *The Wreck*) are true only in so far as they emphasize the sincerity and concentrated passion with which Hopkins depicts the tragedy of the human situation—a tragedy which, however enigmatic it may appear in the later sonnets, is explicitly stated in this poem to be only apparent. A more cogent piece of evidence in support of Mr. Read's view is, perhaps, certain lines in *The Loss of the Eurydice*, written three years later (1878):

The Eurydice—it concerned thee, O Lord:  
and also

Deeply, surely, I deplore it,  
Wondering how my master bore it.<sup>2</sup>

—which might be taken as a veiled rebuke to the Deity. Yet the last three stanzas of the poem contradict even these. I think it must be allowed that in *The Wreck* at least the faith Hopkins evinces is that of one who has replied in the affirmative to Francis Thompson's question:

Is my gloom, after all,  
Shade of his hand outstretched caressingly?<sup>3</sup>

Undoubtedly some change had come over Hopkins by the

<sup>1</sup> *Correspondence of G. M. H. and R. W. D.* (ed. Abbott, Oxford University Press), p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> Lines 97-8.

<sup>3</sup> *The Hound of Heaven.*

time he began to write the later sonnets. Whether it was a definite weakening of faith (as both Mr. Richards and Mr. Read have clearly implied) or a higher spiritual 'desolation' (as his co-religionists now maintain) is a question which cannot be discussed here. But concerning *The Wreck*, his first truly original poem, possibly his masterpiece, it is important in the interests of art, religion, and the poet's character to recognize the fact that he could achieve poetry of a high, if not of the very highest, order in the expression of a definite belief, which may be accurately epitomized in the words of Duns Scotus: 'Deus nihil potest velle, nisi sicut est volendum.' This faith is implicit throughout and culminates in the triumphant concluding stanza, in which the poet, apostrophizing the dead nun, desires her to intercede for those who remain outside the faith in Britain:

Our King back, oh, upon English souls!

And the note of canorous optimism reaches its climax in the last two lines, which resemble the finale of a Bach fugue or a Beethoven symphony. Loaded even beyond the limit of their metrical capacity, their passion seems to expend itself in the heavily accented rhythm of a protracted roll of drums:

Pride, rose, prince, hero of us, high priest,  
Our heart's charity's hearth's fire, our thoughts' chivalry's  
throng's Lord.

Never before have we seen such a row of genitives: a fact which would condemn it in prose, but not in poetry.

#### IV

The whole question of doctrine in poetry has in recent years received exhaustive treatment at the hands of Mr. I. A. Richards, who points out that in these days, when so many beliefs are breaking up, the question as to how much sectarian doctrine may legitimately be incorporated in a poem becomes more urgent than ever before. Consciously or unconsciously, the poet aims at expressing universal experience in terms of his own experience; and as certain beliefs and doctrines form an integral part of that personal experience—are, as it were,

the rough-hewn symbols of it—we should be as illogical in denying him the use of these materials as in denying him the common symbols of language. But naturally the poet will draw upon all such recondite or controversial matters at his own risk: the farther he goes in that direction the fewer will be his followers, the harder will he find it to achieve universality. And what is this universality, so dear to critics of the classical school? There is a universality in Gray's *Elegy*, a universality in *Lycidas*, a universality in the *De Rerum Natura*, a universality in the *Paradiso*; but it is from the more difficult of these poems that we deduce the higher aesthetic criterion. In other words, the poet may make whatever demands he likes upon our knowledge, sympathy, credulity, so long as he is able to transform common objects with passion, create a semblance of authority, and (should his doctrine be unacceptable) bring about not so much 'a willing suspension of disbelief' as a desire to extract from him that which is more fundamental than any belief—the secret of his peculiar attitude and personality.

Apart from temporary ambiguities, unusual coinages, and syntactical audacities (all of which provide a healthy and stimulating resistance to the mind), the main cause of obscurity and difficulty in *The Wreck* is the presence of either esoteric or inadequately articulated doctrine. Frequently, Hopkins is doing no more than following the example of Dante and Milton at their most lucid, as for instance when familiar and illuminating words from the Scriptures are quoted or woven deftly into the fabric of the poem. The last two lines of stanza 26—

What by your measure is the heaven of desire,  
The treasure never eyesight got, nor was ever guessed what for the  
hearing?

are an adaptation of 1 Cor. ii. 9. Again, in stanza 29 we have:

Ah! there was a heart right,  
There was single eye!

in which the phrase 'single eye' is taken from St. Matthew vi. 22. Occasionally we find a piece of esoteric doctrine which

could arouse the intended response only in a certain type of Catholic reader :

The appealing of the Passion is tenderer in prayer apart.<sup>1</sup>

But the sensitive unbeliever is immediately swept on by the sheer pagan splendour of the next lines :

Other, I gather, in measure her mind's  
Burden in wind's burly and beat of endragonèd seas.

Mr. Richards has said that when a poem is completely successful such elements of doctrine and belief as are present do not obtrude themselves upon the reader's consciousness ; whenever they do we cease to be reading poetry and for the nonce are reading theology, political history, or what not. That is usually true, though the Plimsoll line of such obtrusion must vary considerably from reader to reader. But there is one passage in *The Wreck* where many will be pulled up with a jolt, stung into resistance or resentment as their minds are jerked suddenly from pure poetry to theological polemic :

But Gertrude, lily, and Luther are two of a town,  
Christ's lily and beast of the waste wood.<sup>2</sup>

Yet is it not well done ? The symbolism, with its ominous echo of Jeremiah<sup>3</sup> and Dante,<sup>4</sup> is certainly effective. Moreover, in style and rhythm the stanza is in harmony with the rest of the poem. We may perhaps compare the passage to the famous diatribe in *Lycidas*—by some condemned as the one 'false note', by others praised as a *locus classicus* of successfully poeticized doctrine.<sup>5</sup>

When all allowances have been made, however, it will be found that *The Wreck of the Deutschland* has a completeness, an intellectual and emotional unity, a subtlety and variety of verbal orchestration which are unique not only in English but in the literature of the world. It is essentially a poem to

<sup>1</sup> Stanza 27.    <sup>2</sup> Stanza 20.    <sup>3</sup> Jeremiah v. 6.    <sup>4</sup> *Inferno*, i.

<sup>5</sup> Hopkins had great faith in the value of his poem ; but in a letter to Bridges he admits—'There are some immaturities in it I should never be guilty of now' (loc. cit., January 1881). The above passage is probably one of them.



be read aloud; but, like a sonata, it demands not a little interpretive skill. Its qualities are not to be gauged in one or two hasty, possibly peevish, readings. It is tart wine, but it mellows with keeping. The majority of sensitive readers will probably experience at first a mixture of attraction and repulsion. They will be attracted by what Father Lahey has called 'the many marvellous lines which spangle the whole poem'—an unfortunate saying, which gives an erroneous impression of mere accidental and extrinsic felicity; they will be repelled by the strangeness of its individual style. And it must be confessed that in an age like the present, when pedantry, preciousness, and super-self-conscious art forms are freely indulged by the intelligentsia in their reaction against outmoded ideals, when an artist is almost compelled to attach himself to some fashionable -ism and to address some special coterie—in such an age the stylized manner is immediately suspect. But it is the task of criticism to rescue the truly original artist from the atmosphere of charlatanism, to recognize and vindicate the work which, in spite of apparent oddity and eclecticism, is virtually a sincere reforging of universal modes and experiences:

He swept what scope he was  
To sweep, and must obey.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of Hopkins it will be found that familiarity with his style dispels much of the strangeness without destroying the value of his innovation, without resultant triteness or the feeling that trickery has been unmasked. The infinite variety in *The Wreck* is in some measure due to its difficulty. As we re-read the poem, we are continually surprised by new aspects of its poetry, but we do not exhaust its intellectual possibilities. In Dixon's words, it is 'enormously powerful'. It takes possession of the mind, fascinates, puzzles, exasperates, allures, and recaptures it once again. Some may be, indeed have been, disturbed by the fervent irrationalities of its Trinitarianism, Marianism, martyrolatry, and saint-worship; they may, at first, resent the insidious persuasiveness of its

<sup>1</sup> *Poems of G. M. H.*, No. 67, stanza 6.

appeal; but they will probably be forced to agree with Longinus that 'it is not to persuasion but to ecstasy that passages of extraordinary genius carry the hearer'. To the ardent Catholic the poem must always stand as one of the loftiest expressions of both the central problem and the crowning glory of his creed—the problem of tragedy and the triumph of faith. To others it will perhaps rather suggest the tragedy of faith and the triumph of pure poetry. There are things in this poem which will never please the prejudiced, the occasional, the superficial, and the uninformed reader. Moreover, there will always be people of taste and judgement who, like Robert Bridges, will be unable to pronounce it uniformly successful. Yet to an ever-growing number of serious students of literature it will undoubtedly in due course take the rank it deserves beside the *Nativity Ode*, *Lycidas*, *Intimations of Immortality*, and *The Hound of Heaven*.

W. H. GARDNER.

## AN OPEN LETTER TO DR. TILLYARD

Id cinerem aut Manes reputas curare sepultos ?

DEAR DR. TILLYARD,  
A friend of mine once described himself as being 'hungry for rational opposition'. The words seemed to me to hit off very happily the state of a man who has published doctrines which he knows to be controversial, and yet finds no one to voice the general disagreement that he looked for. It was with just such a hunger that I sat down to read your formidable *Rejoinder* to my essay on the *Personal Heresy*.<sup>1</sup> In such matters to find an opponent is almost to find a friend; and I have to thank you very heartily for your kind and candid contribution to the problem.

In order to narrow the controversy as much as possible I will begin by recanting all that I can recant. If I have attributed any positions wrongly either to yourself or to Mr. T. S. Eliot, I withdraw the attribution at once. My defence for choosing from your works and his what were, after all, but *obiter dicta*, is that my enemy was much less a fully fledged theory than a half-conscious assumption which I saw creeping into our critical tradition under the protection of its very vagueness. That I should choose my examples from the works of celebrated contemporaries was but reason. The heresy, if it be a heresy, which had deceived you, Sir, could not be regarded as contemptible. Nor do I defend my belief that this heresy is a new one. You may be right in considering it 'shop-soiled': and certainly our business is with its credentials, not its chronology. I will even give up my interpretation of the passage in Isaiah, and admit—if this seems to you to be the truth—that my reactions to it are private, partial, and idiosyncratic: that the good reader will find burning indignation where my romantic bias turned all 'to favour and to prettiness'. Whether my attack on the per-

<sup>1</sup> *Personal Heresy, Essays and Studies*, 1934; *Rejoinder*, *ibid.* 1935.

sonal heresy is really a belittling of the individual or has any affinity with the 'totalitarian' position will best appear in what follows.

But while I gladly make these admissions, I cannot conceal the fact that there is a residuum of still unshaken disagreement; and to this I will now proceed. Your case against me, if I have read it aright, falls under four main heads. In the first place you meet my implied conception of personality with a *distinguo*. Personality, you point out, does not mean such trivial accidents as I suggest but rather 'some mental pattern which makes Keats Keats and not Mr. Smith or Mr. Jones',<sup>1</sup> and which you conceive as 'underlying the accidents of quotidian existence'<sup>2</sup> and displaying itself to us by style. In the second place you call my attention to what you describe as the 'Paradox' of poetic creation whereby the poet is *ipsissimus cum minime ipse*.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, you accuse me of confusing the means of communication with that which is communicated;<sup>4</sup> and finally you are (in the old sense of the word) scandalized by my apparent preference of things to people.

You will observe that this list excludes some important passages in your *Rejoinder*, which I do not consider it my business to answer. I was much interested in your distinction between fluid and rigid personalities; but since, as you most candidly admit, the fluid cannot be 'deciphered' in their literary productions,<sup>5</sup> their existence need not concern us at the moment, and if I can make good my case for the rigid I shall have made it good *a fortiori* for the fluid. Nor do I propose to make clear the supposed bases of my position in doctrines 'about racial perception, and about God'. To be sure, there is no denying that I consider my theory to be inconsistent with a thoroughgoing materialism—like every other theory, including materialism itself. But I do not in the least wish to argue the matter on that level or postulate anything that would not be granted by 'common sense'—and if the conclusion of my essay has darkened counsel by awaking

<sup>1</sup> *Rejoinder*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

the uneasy theophobia of any of our contemporaries, I regret my blunder. I do not intend to relate my views to any 'vaguely mystical or Platonic notion (common enough in the late nineteenth century)'.<sup>1</sup> I will indeed confess that some desultory investigation of the problem of the Universal has left me with a certain respect for the solution (I would hardly call it vague) which Plato inclined to in the dialogues of his middle period; and my respect is not diminished by the popularity which Plato enjoyed in the nineteenth century any more than by that which he enjoyed in the seventeenth, sixteenth, fifteenth, third, second, or first. But I base nothing on Plato.\* If there is anything Platonic in my position, I trust I shall argue to it and not from it. There is, indeed, only one philosophical presupposition which I think I ought to make plain before I proceed. It is one with which you seem to disagree when you contrast the Personal with 'the abstract'.<sup>2</sup> You must excuse me, Sir, if I ask you whether you really intend to identify the terms Personal and Concrete. If so, then the debate must indeed move on to quite different levels. I never intended to suggest that what poetry presented to us was the abstract: and I took it for granted that many things besides personality—things like apples—were concrete. Nay, if I thought personality the only concrete, I should also think it the 'subject of all verse': I should be a more radical 'personalist' than you. For me a person is neither less nor more concrete than a piece of silk (or felt!). Both are concrete, and of both it is fatally easy to think abstractly.

With this we reach the first main head—your contention that a just conception of personality can ignore trivial things, and rise above 'practical or everyday personality' to some 'mental pattern which makes Keats Keats', and which 'underlies' the 'accidents of quotidian existence'.<sup>3</sup> This doctrine has an old and honourable descent. Even without the word 'underlie' (and its correlative 'accidents') it would be apparent that we have reached something very like the traditional definition of *substance*: and if we stress the dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Rejoinder*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

inction, implicit in your language, between the superior dignity of the true personality and the 'triviality' of its 'quotidian' 'accidents', we shall find ourselves in agreement with that doctrine of the Noumenal and Phenomenal selves which some would call vague and mystical and which was certainly popular in the nineteenth century. For my own part, Sir, I have not the least objection to finding myself on the same side as Kant, or even the Schoolmen, in a matter of logic. But while I am anxious to exclude personality from what I believe to be its wrong place, I am much too fond of personality in its right place to accept this purified, underlying, expurgated version of it. The thing may exist (or subsist?) in some hyperuranian realm: but is it what we mean by personality? 'Nothing', said Johnson, 'is too little for so little a creature as man'; and I submit that beings purged, as you suggest, of all that is little, would not be men. The smell of boiled beef, and presumably Keats's reactions to the smell, you exclude from 'that which makes him Keats'. What, then, of wine and his reaction to wine? Must the blushful Hippocrene be left behind with the beef, or have drinks some privilege of soaring into the realms that food cannot enter? What of women, whom Keats confessedly classed with confectionery? Do they drag up the sweetmeats to the Noumenal, or do the sweetmeats keep them down to the Phenomenal? In a word, what resemblance would your very Keats bear to the man who wrote the poems and is now dead? Take a man's mistress, or his daughter, and give her back to him attenuated to some such 'mental pattern', so freed from trivialities, and he will exclaim that he might as well have followed her coffin to the grave. 'Personality', in the sense suggested, is not the object of affection: it is not the subject of legal rights or moral obligations: it has not, since the pattern changes, the continuity claimed for the 'soul' in other systems: in a word it does not seem to me to deserve the name 'personality' in any respect. A man whom I know dreamed that he was at Falstaff's funeral; and as the mourners were saying that they had lost only the mortal husk of Sir John and that the real man awaited them in a

better world, my friend awoke crying out, 'But we've lost his *fatness*!' I am not sure about the theology of this, but I approve the sentiment. Where personality is in question I will not give up a wrinkle or a stammer. I am offended when a man whom I heartily love or hate starts wearing a new kind of hat.

It may be replied that this is a dispute about a word. If you choose to call this purged 'mental pattern' by the name of Personality, why should I protest? I think, Sir, for a good reason. The name suggests warmth and humanity, intimacy, the real rough and tumble of human life: it is by that suggestion that the personal heresy gains adherents. Would any one have embraced it—would you yourself, Sir, have embarked on its defence—if it were clear from the outset that the only personality in question was personal in so very Pickwickian a sense? But I will not press the point. Let us suppose that such 'mental patterns' exist, and that they are properly called personalities. The question still remains whether our apprehension of them is valuable because they are such and such patterns, or because the things seen through them are interesting or valuable. I do not think the discussion has left that question just where it found it. When once such mental patterns have been detached from the quotidian selves which they underlie, what other value can they possibly have than the value I suggest—that of being glasses or windows through which we see what is worth seeing? For certainly you can no longer talk with them, fight with them, drink with them, or *dele drury*.

Let us turn to the second point—the paradox of art, whereby the artist never expresses himself so clearly as when he has suppressed his personality. You will remember that you illustrated this doctrine by a reference to the Delphic charioteer. The sculptor, you assumed, had no thought of self-expression: 'yet' (you continue) 'the statue is like no other statue on earth'.<sup>1</sup> What then? I never dreamed of denying that a great work of art was unique. That, Sir, is not the question between us. The question is whether the experi-

<sup>1</sup> *Rejoinder*, p. 12.

ence which we have of such uniqueness is an experience of the artist's personality: or, more simply, whether a great (and therefore, doubtless, a unique) work expresses the maker. This being so, to argue 'The statue is unlike all others: therefore it has expressed the sculptor's personality' would be a glaring *petitio*, and one which you have abstained from. (Your sentence runs on: 'I believe this unlikeness . . . to be connected with the sculptor's personality.')<sup>1</sup> But then it is not easy to see how the Delphic charioteer will help us. Doubtless he is unique, *sui generis*, unpredictable and irrepeatably: but how can we thence infer the personality of the carver when it is clear that other things—things which are not works of art at all—are equally unique? It is not only poems or statues which seem to say, 'I am myself alone'. A sunset, a flight of birds past the window, the gesture of an athlete, or the sudden onset of rain—any of these, at a favoured moment, may come over us with just that sense of unity and individuality which you describe and extort from us a *verweile doch*. It need not even be a 'thing', in any ordinary sense, that produces this experience: it is often a contingent bundle of the most heterogeneous data. The sun comes out—a cock crows in the yard—at the same moment I finish reading the *Orlando Furioso* for the first time; and all this becomes for me a unique whole, memorable and unified as a sonata, singular and definite in flavour as a sonnet, an apple, or a kiss. I am sure I should be answered pretty quickly if I tried to argue directly from such experiences to some highly personal form of theism: but my inference would be neither more nor less valid than that from the felt individuality of a statue to the belief that we are apprehending the personality of a sculptor. It is true, of course, that we start by knowing that a man made the statue as we do not start by knowing that a god made my sun-cockerow-Ariosto complex. But does this really help? The experience occurs both when there is no known artist in question and when there is. It is simply bad logic to devise for one phenomenon an explanation that will not cover the other. If we allowed the artist's personality

<sup>1</sup> *Rejoinder*. Italics mine.



to cover the instance of the charioteer, we should still have the sunsets on our hands, and when we had found a new explanation for them (theological, daemonological, psycho-analytical, physiological, or what not) then, clearly, this new explanation could be used to cover the charioteer as well, and by the law of Occam's razor ought to be so used. The first hypothesis would now be otiose—an *entitas ficta praeter necessitatem*.

I cannot help thinking that the common, but invalid, inference from the uniqueness of the work to the personality of the worker is an unconscious pun. When we claim individuality for the statue, we are using the word in its philosophical sense. Every concrete, everything that occupies space or time or both, is in this sense an individual: and it is the privilege of art (as also, more mysteriously, of certain moments outside art) to make us vividly aware of the fact. But when we pass from this real individuality in the work to a belief that we are in contact with a personality, are we not possibly misled by the fact that the word 'individual' has another meaning in colloquial language? Because the work is individual we conclude that it displays to us 'an individual' in the popular sense—that is, a mind or soul or person.

To you, Sir, it seems that I am choosing to see only one half of the paradox<sup>1</sup>—viz. the artist's self-suppression. I reply that the other half of the paradox (his self-expression) can be granted only if we are already agreed that great and unique work expresses personality. But this, unfortunately, is the very thing we are debating.

The third charge against me is that I have confused communication with the thing communicated. You hold that my analysis of the lines from *Hyperion*, while it may show that the instruments which Keats uses are common and impersonal, by no means shows that the same is true of the experience which he records. But then this analysis was meant to show only the one, and not the other. Having established, as I thought, the impersonality of the means, I then proceeded<sup>2</sup> to work out an independent proof of the impersonality of the

<sup>1</sup> *Rejoinder*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Essays and Studies*, 1934, p. 23.

content: in the form, what's more, of a dilemma with two horns and everything handsome about it. Since you, Sir, have not here perfectly followed my argument, I have little doubt that the passage is culpably obscure; and I am confirmed in this unwelcome conclusion by the fact that I am now approaching a part of the question which has certainly been darkened by my carelessness.

You find me 'too rigidly concerned with things and too little heedful of states of mind'.<sup>1</sup> You cannot understand 'the value I put on "things"'.<sup>2</sup> You have the impression that silk, or even felt, interest me more than the bodies of women and the heads of men which they adorn. The impression is false—but I have only myself to blame. What follows must be taken as words spoken from the stool of penance.

When I talked of 'things' I meant to contrast them not with 'people' in general but with that particular person whom we call the poet. Silk was preferred not to Julia, but to Herrick: trees not to Saturn and Thea, but to Keats. In fact, I was including 'people' as a species of 'things'—though how I supposed that the reader would divine this is not easy to see. Let me now make a fresh start: and if it prove a better one, I shall owe it all to you. I freely admit that the 'things' most commonly presented to us in great literature are precisely those highly specialized things which we call men and women. To think of literature is to think first and foremost not of silks or forests but of Patroclus or Sancho Panza, of Roland or Micawber or Macbeth. When I selected the silk from Herrick's poem, I did so merely for the sake of simplicity. If I had dealt with the whole poem, with Julia-in-silk, the result would have been just the same. To me, the end attained by reading the poem is a heightened perception of the charm of a beautiful woman beautifully dressed. Now I admit that this charm is conveyed to me by an account of the effect which it had (or is feigned to have had) on Herrick. But, to speak the bare truth, it never occurred to me before I read your rejoinder that either the poet or any of his readers was in the least interested in this effect at all except in so far as

<sup>1</sup> *Essays and Studies*, 1935, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

it is the necessary medium through which its cause (the attractiveness of Julia) appears. Let us suppose for the moment that the poem is autobiographical. Surely you will grant that Herrick, in the article of his love-liking, was interested in Julia, not in his own reactions to Julia—nay, those reactions *consisted in* the fact that Julia, not Herrick, absorbed him. To attend to Herrick, therefore, is to cut ourselves off from the experience that Herrick is trying to convey. To be sure, the epistemologists will tell us that Julia's attractiveness is not a quality inherent in Julia but an effect she produces on observers. But unhappily they will tell us the same of her colour, warmth, fragrance, softness—and even, in a sense, of her size. But certainly poetry can make nothing of this way of thinking. Poetry, like unreflective experience, must attribute not only secondary but even tertiary qualities to the object: it must give the green to the tree not to our eyes, the scent to the flowers not to our noses, the attractiveness to the woman not to our sexual nature. Julia can be described in poetry, only by her effects: but the same holds (in poetry) of sun and moon and God Almighty. Herrick has awakened to the miracle that Julia is: but it is the miracle, not the fact of his awakening, that interests both him and us—though, admittedly, we should not be interested unless he had so awaked.

The same desire for simplicity which confused my treatment of Herrick's poem led me, in general, to illustrate my position by passages of natural description. I see now that this has inevitably made it appear that I set some peculiar value on the inanimate. But I do not. Among the objects presented to us by imaginative literature, people or 'personalities' hold the chief place. I wish to exclude none of them—only the poet himself. I want all the people whom Shakespeare invented: but not Shakespeare. And the reason for this seemingly fantastic distinction is really a very simple one.

But before I proceed to state it, I would remind you that I am theorizing not about art in general but about literature: and not even about all literature, but about imaginative

literature—about poetry, drama, and the novel. I am prepared to grant that there are writings, and writings properly called literature, whose value consists in the impression they give us of the writer's personality. Private letters are obviously in this class: and many essays are also in it. I should not be greatly disturbed if we found, now and then, a piece of such writing which, by a 'sport', had put on the disguise of verse. Nor do I deny that there are borderline cases—things which might plausibly be reckoned either as imaginative literature or as instances of that truly personal writing which is but talking at a distance. The distinctions between animal and vegetable or day and night remain just and profitable although they are blurred at the frontiers. And within the realm of imaginative literature there is, I maintain, a good reason for putting the poet out of sight while we read.

It is sometimes asked whether Shakespeare was like this or that character in his plays. I do not know the answer. But there is one difference between Shakespeare and all his characters which I do know. Shakespeare was a real person: they are all imaginary people. When I read the plays I prepare myself for *feigning*—they do but jest, poison in jest. My objection to the poet's personality is that it is an intruder in this imagined world—an intruder, I may add, from a much higher realm—and that his presence amidst his own creations, if it occurred, would demand from me, at the same moment, two incompatible responses. For Shakespeare was a real man. My response to the real both is and ought to be quite distinct from my response to the imaginary. Every child knows that we do well to watch, and, in a sense, to enjoy, the murder of Desdemona: and every child knows that if we so watched and so enjoyed the like in real life, we should be villains.

You, Sir, have said that 'part of our response to poetry is similar to the stirring we experience when we meet some one whose personality impresses us'.<sup>1</sup> It is indeed. The greatest of all similarities exists between a face and that face reflected

<sup>1</sup> *Essays and Studies*, 1935, p. 10.

in a mirror, between a body and a shadow, between a thing and the same thing imagined. Long ago Hume found how hard it is to define the difference between an 'idea' and an 'impression'. But are we therefore to identify them? Does any one doubt that this similarity is consistent with the most important of all differences? And if so, how can I offer to the poet the same response which I offer to his poetry? The poet is a man, a real man. I exclude him not because I think meanly of personality but because I reverence it. There is something to make the blood run cold in the very idea of offering to a man, even to a dead man like Keats, that same 'willing suspension of disbelief', that impartial, unhelping, uninterfering, acquiescent contemplation which I offer to Hyperion or Enceladus. The poet is my fellow creature—a traveller between birth and death—one of *us*. My response to him is not on the plane of imagination at all. The appeal of real personality is to the heart—to the will and the affections. The proper pleasure of it is called love, the proper pain, hatred. I do not owe the poet some aesthetic response: I owe him love, thanks, assistance, justice, charity—or, it may be, a sound thrashing.

The last alternative is important. When the personality of the poet happens to be one we like, there is some excuse for confusing imaginative delight in the work with social or affectional delight in the man. But what of the poets whose personality we dislike? There is a strong personality in Dryden, and I happen to dislike it very much. But I delight in the *boisteousness* and bravura of his scenes, as in the sweetness of his verse. Am I wrong to disregard the personal antipathy while I read, in order to enjoy the poetry? If you say that I ought to correct the antipathy, then you lift me at once out of the imaginative into the ethical. For to decide that question we must start investigating historical data and moral principles, and *Absalom and Achitophel* meanwhile will have to wait. It is the very nature of a real personality, once seriously considered, to force us out of the world of poetry.

Perhaps this is best seen when we are dealing with a contemporary poet. Your quotation from Mr. Eliot here

comes to hand. We are in some disagreement about its merits—I would not call the mixture of golf-balls and biblical references ‘startling’,<sup>1</sup> and would scarcely have called it startling ten years ago—but it is certainly good enough for our purpose. Now to read these lines as poetry surely means to see the ‘land of lobelias and tennis flannels’, suspending (if need be) my disbelief, and to derive from that vision such pleasure or profit as I may. To attempt this is my debt to Mr. Eliot’s poetry. And if, instead, I surrender myself to the ‘feel’ of Mr. Eliot’s personality (as indeed I easily can), if I allow myself to attend to the kind of man thus speaking of the suburbs, then I find myself carried into realms of thought and feeling which are fatal to the reception of poetry. For Mr. Eliot, thus dismissing some tens of thousands of my fellow citizens, is something even more important than a poet. He is a man: and, being a widely influential man, he is either friend or foe—either a *vox clamantis* at which I should tremble, or a proud, misunderstanding detractor whom I should strive to silence, if I can, and then pardon. And this not only happens to me but happens with my approval. Mr. Eliot is my fellow creature: those whose necessities make them live in the suburbs are also my fellow creatures. When I think of him (which in this context involves thinking of them too) I not only am carried, but ought to be carried, out of poetic attention into that larger world where literary laws must yield to laws logical and ethical.

I hope it is now apparent that my doctrine depends as much on my respect for men as on my respect for things. If I regard Mr. Eliot as a friend, well. If I regard him as an enemy, then by so doing I honour his personality much more than by treating him as a doll or a picture, or an object of contemplation. I will try another dilemma. You maintain that we do well to respond to the poet’s personality while we read. But if this is the response really proper to personality—the practical, affective response of love or hatred made by one man to another—then it overwhelms poetry in matters more important, though poetically irrelevant. If it is any-

<sup>1</sup> *Essays and Studies*, 1935, p. 11.

thing less than this, if it is some purely contemplative, appraising, criticizing gaze, then it is an insult. It is to make of a man a mere thing, a spectacle. We do not wish to be thus treated ourselves. Is there, in social life, a grosser incivility than that of thinking about the man who addresses us instead of thinking about what he says? For my own part, I feel that I should use a dog rather ill if I regarded it with that detached observation which we accord to Hamlet and Imogen.

But there is yet another way in which the Personal Heresy offends against personality; and it is one which all members of our profession must ponder. I am referring to the growth of what may be called Poetolatry. Some time ago Matthew Arnold prophesied that poetry would come to replace religion; and the personal heretics have made this true in a sense which he probably did not foresee. Poetry has, naturally enough, not yet attempted the salvation of souls or the enlightenment of the understanding: but the cult of poetry is taking on some secondary religious characteristics—notably the worship of saints and the traffic in relics. Every teacher of English has had pupils to whom the study of literature principally meant a series of acts of devotion to various dead men who wrote poetry. We have biographies of Keats and even (I believe) of D. H. Lawrence which are almost exercises in hagiography. We have even had such tangled trinities as ‘Christ, Shakespeare, and Keats’ proposed to us. If we have also our ‘debunking’ biographies, that is but the reverse side of the same medal: blasphemy is the child of religion. I have no doubt, Sir, that you agree with me, simply as a man of letters and a teacher, in lamenting this collapse from criticism into cult. But there are deeper reasons for condemning it. If personality is among the noblest modes of being, as you and I believe, then it is important that our response to personality should not be side-tracked or perverted. And that response is essentially a social and affective one. It is called love—whether *ἔρως*, *φιλία*, or *στοργή*. As there is no other way of enjoying beer but by drinking it, or of enjoying colour but by looking at it, so there is no other way of enjoying personality

but by loving it. For veneration, pity, and the like are species of love.

Now it is clearly not desirable that too much of this response should, in any event, be directed towards the dead. But when the dead are really lovable and loved by us for that reason, this extension of our affective life into the past is not unnatural. The recorded personalities of Socrates, Johnson, and Scott compel such affection. Our love of them is an extension, not a misdirection, of the impulse: the object, though distant and unresponsive, is still a personality in the full sense, with all its quotidian trivialities about it. But the case is altered if we are dealing with that 'mental pattern' which exists in a good book, and specially in a good poem. The nobility of Johnson is a real thing, and so is the nobility of the *Aeneid*: but the nobility of Virgil is a mere snare for self-deception, because we can (within very wide limits indeed) fashion that idol in any shape we want. Johnson, because his personality survives—because he affects us as a man and not merely as an author—is obstinate and resistant. We converse with him, being men ourselves, under 'the mutual awe of equal condition'. Virgil is malleable: he will never pull you up short, as Johnson, even across the centuries, so often does. It is no good pretending that Johnson would have listened sympathetically to an account of my repressions: it is quite easy (if one likes) to imagine Virgil doing so. The excellence of Donne's pornographic elegies is a fact: so is the excellence of his devotional poetry. But the 'personality' constructed to explain their coexistence (as if it needed any explanation!) may well be a mere projection on which modern adolescents can lavish any kind of familiarity they choose. The real absurdity of the triad I mentioned above—Christ, Shakespeare, and Keats—lies in the heterogeneity of its members. From the Christian point of view there are other objections: but for my present purpose it is enough to notice that while the first member exists for us as a man, even as Johnson exists, the second does not exist at all, and the third only to a limited degree. The injunction to obey Christ has a meaning: the injunction to obey Shake-



speare is meaningless. Attention to Shakespeare's 'personality' can have no influence on any human action: it is a misdirection of feelings properly social and active to an object which admits of no action and no true society.

There is a reaction at present going on against the excessive love of pet animals. We have been taught to despise the rich, barren woman who loves her lapdog too much and her neighbour too little. It may be that when once the true impulse is inhibited, a dead poet is a nobler substitute than a live Peke, but this is by no means obvious. You can do something for the Peke, and it can make some response to you. It is at least sentient: but most poetolaters hold that a dead man has no consciousness, and few indeed suppose that he has any which we are likely to modify. Unless you hold beliefs which enable you to obey the colophons of the old books by praying for the authors' souls, there is nothing that you can do for a dead poet: and certainly he will do nothing for you. He did all he could for you while he lived: nothing more will ever come. I do not say that a personal emotion towards the author will not sometimes arise spontaneously while we read: but if it does we should let it pass swiftly over the mind like a ripple that leaves no trace. If we retain it we are but cosseting with substitutes an emotion whose true object is our neighbour. Hence it is not surprising that those who most amuse themselves with personality after this ghostly fashion often show little respect for it in their parents, their servants, or their wives. You, Sir, know far more psychology than I. There is no need for me to tell you how such substitutions work upon a man; how such facile satisfactions of a vital impulse, allayings spun from our own inwards and therefore never inaccessible, never resistant, never to be paid for in cash, disable and (as it were) drive out of the market that difficult and fruitful obedience to the same impulse which can be learnt only in the real world. For the sake of personality, therefore, we must reject the personal heresy. We must go to books for that which books can give us—to be interested, delighted, or amused, to be made merry or to be made wise. But for the proper pleasure of person-

ality, that is, for love, we must go where it can be found—to our homes or our common rooms, to railway carriages and public houses, or even (for you see I am one of the vulgar) to the ‘land of lobelias and tennis flannels’.

And with this, my case is ended. As I glance through the letter again I notice that I have not been able, in the heat of argument, to express as clearly or continuously as I could have wished my sense that I am engaged with ‘an older and a better soldier’. I have not ventured to tell how much I admired and how much I have learnt from your *Milton*, lest other readers should think it irrelevant. But I have little fear that you will misunderstand me. We have both learnt our dialectic in the rough academic arena where knocks that would frighten the London literary coteries are given and taken in good part: and even where you may think me something too pert you will not suspect me of malice. If you honour me with a reply it will be in kind; and then, God defend the right!

I am, my dear Sir, with the greatest respect,

Your obedient servant,

C. S. LEWIS.